FASCISM AND YOUTH

BY GEORGY BORISOVICH SANDOMIRSKY (1882-1938)

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FROM THE AUTHOR

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Literature about fascism, which until recently was little known in the USSR, has gradually accumulated here too.

The USSR, the only country in the world that has overthrown the rule of capitalism, cannot help but watch with unflagging attention this attempt by traitors to the working class, who are predominantly the leaders of Italian fascism, to stop the struggle of the international proletariat for its liberation and to turn Italy into a stronghold of world reaction.

Our youth, marching in step with the revolutionary workers' movement of the whole world, is also looking at the international fascist movement with deep excitement. In the socio-political respect, the USSR and Italy are currently antipodes. Every success of the Soviet Union undermines the foundations of the fascist dictatorship throughout the world. International fascism has no more terrible enemy than the Russian revolutionary youth - the vanguard of the workers' movement of the whole world. This vanguard will have to decide with its own efforts the fate of the next stages of the October Revolution, complete the work of the older generation and, consequently, deal a mortal blow to international fascism.

That is why it is necessary for our revolutionary youth to study the enemy camp well.

With this brochure the author wanted to make his contribution to the cause of familiarizing our youth with the fascist movement, in particular, with its cradle - Italian fascism.

Another aim which the author pursued with his pamphlet was to kindle in young readers hatred and deserved contempt for those miserable chatterboxes from the ranks of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia who, submitting to the spirit of the times, often join the ranks of the workers' movement with their base, egoistic goals and then, introducing

cowardice and confusion into its ranks, openly betray it. The author wants to believe that these examples of disgusting apostasy will further strengthen the enthusiasm of our revolutionary youth, will help it to develop in itself the necessary tempering and the ability to discern who is a friend or foe of the working masses throughout the world.

Revolutionary youth is the sure guarantee of the victory of the working class over fascism, led by renegades from socialism and supported by traitorous reformists.

G. Sandomirsky

TO THE SECOND EDITION

Italian fascism is currently in a state of collapse. Its financial and economic policy has completely failed, causing a deep, almost incurable economic crisis in the country—and only on the basis of this economic crisis could the political crisis, caused directly by the murder of the popular socialist deputy Matteotti, take such an acute form.

Italian fascism is unlikely to give up its positions without a fight. Already the minds of the vanguard of Italian proletarians are occupied with the thought of the form in which fascism might be overthrown. The bourgeois parties, now in opposition, are already arguing about the succession. The proletariat is unlikely to stand with arms folded at the decisive moment. On the other hand, in the ranks of decaying fascism, a division is taking place into "right" and "left" - this is how the openly pogromistic elements call themselves. Wishing to prolong their days, Mussolini and Co. - on the day of the 6th anniversary of the founding of the fascist party, which took place in March of this year - once again pulled out from under the bushel the old project of forming an international fascist international and proclaimed Rome its center. But it is unlikely that Italian fascism will be revived by an influx of fresh forces from outside. The leaders themselves feel that it is doomed to disappear.

With even greater interest the vanguard of the international proletariat is looking at what is happening now in the laboratory of social reaction.

There is no doubt that at the moment of decisive clash between the two camps in Italy, the revolutionary Italian youth will have to bear on their shoulders the hardest part of the struggle.

Our youth, connected with them by common revolutionary aspirations, will not remain indifferent either.

That is why the author considered it timely to reissue his brochure "Black Blouses", which has long been sold out. Significant changes are made to the text: the presentation of the salute to the history of the fascist movement in Italy is significantly shortened and, due to these shortenings, a description of the current period of the movement is given. The very structure of the brochure has also been changed: the first part is devoted to covering Italian fascism in general, while the second part is devoted to the present and future role of revolutionary youth in the fight against international fascism.

G. Sandomiersty

TO THE MARTYRDOM AND TO THE GLORY
FOR HIS EXCREDATED ASSASSINATION
ASSURED
JAMES MATTEOTTI
MEMBER OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT
WARNS AND CALLS ON THE CITIZENS OF ITALY
JUSTICE PEACE
The most popular image of Matteotti in Italy

PART ONE

I

General position of Italy before the war. - Agricultural classes

Fascism is one of those great problems of our time, ignorance of which can be a serious obstacle to the revolutionary activity of any of us. It is impossible to go into battle without being familiar with the enemy's strength and his methods of struggle. That is why it is important to agree on a precise definition of fascism, around which there are many disputes. Fascism cannot be more precisely defined in our time as an open, merciless enemy of communism, an irreconcilable enemy of the social revolution - more simply, as anti-communism. In the south of Europe, in Italy, once famous for its revolutionary traditions, it has managed to build a citadel of international reaction, which has become an "experimental field" for the shareholders of each capitalist country, to make a breach in that revolutionary cohesion of the Western European workers, which is the surest guarantee of their victory.

We do not doubt the close kinship that exists between the reactionary currents in different countries, nor the community of aims they pursue. However, this circumstance does not in any way relieve us from the duty of studying those features, or rather those political and economic prerequisites, which for a time determined the stunning success of the fascist movement in Italy. The elucidation of international fascism will gain absolutely nothing from the fact that we apply a common yardstick to the fascism that has swelled to very respectable proportions in Italy and to the fascism that is just emerging in America.

The commonality of aims—the establishment of capitalist reaction—does not in the least prevent fascism in almost every country from having its own unique organizational forms and a thousand major and minor peculiarities, from differing from fascism in neighboring countries. If the existence of certain economic and political conditions in Russia—the defeat of its army in the imperialist war, etc.—was necessary for the implementation of the social revolution, then certain socio-economic

prerequisites were no less necessary in Italy in order to ensure such exceptional success for fascism in that country.

As is well known, Italy joined the world war much later than the other members of the Great Entente. The main obstacle to Italy's entry into the war was its membership in the Triple Alliance. By acting on the side of the Entente against its former allies—Austria, Germany—Italy, in the event of disagreement with the Entente, risked finding itself in an isolated political position.

But the obstacles to its entry into the ranks of the Entente and participation in the world war were not limited to these political considerations.

Italy, despite the fact that it has never been able to feed its population with its own bread, is a predominantly agricultural country. Attempts to compensate for the defects of Italian agricultural economy by intensive development of industry coincided precisely with the pre-war period of 1911-14. French capitalism by this time had made great strides in penetrating the heavy industry of Northern Italy; namely, it played the role of the factor that energetically inclined both the government and public opinion in Italy to enter the war on the side of the Entente. But the influence of Entente capitalism was far from predominant in Italy. German industry, which was experiencing an extraordinary boom at that time and feverishly seeking new markets for its products, turned its attention to Italy and in a short time acquired significant influence there. The largest commercial and industrial enterprises were connected with German capital, not to mention the successful penetration of German finance capital into Italy, which strengthened its influence mainly through the "Banca Commerciale" (Commercial Bank). The circles connected with German capital were especially energetically opposed to Italy's break with the Triple Alliance and its participation on the side of the Entente. In his book "Unpacified Europe", one of the decisive opponents of Italy's accession to the Entente, the then Prime Minister Francesco Nitti, explains his position as follows:

"Italy," he says, "has always had to contend with great difficulties on the path of its development... Occupying too narrow a territory, moreover covered with mountains

and generally insufficient for its rapidly growing population, Italy has more than once been forced to resort to the most decisive measures to improve its position in this regard. It has had to develop its industry under conditions much more difficult than those that have befallen other states. It is almost the only one of all the great powers that has had to develop its industry in the complete absence of coal and an almost complete absence of iron in its own bowels."

Nitti and other supporters of Italy's "neutral" position rightly feared that Italy's participation in the war would undermine the success that Italian industry had achieved in the last 15 years before the war.

All opponents of Italy's accession to the Entente were convinced that during the period of belonging to the Triple Alliance, Italy created almost all of its current industry, strengthened its national unity and consolidated its entire economic position.

But if the agents of German imperialism, which at one time found powerful support in the person of the Vatican and turned Italy into a stronghold of its propaganda, were not asleep, then, on the other hand, propaganda in favor of the Entente was also being carried out in Italy at a fairly intensive pace. As it now turns out, the patriotic movement that had arisen in Italy by that time, later called fascism, and already then inspired by the former socialist Benito Mussolini, who called on Italians to participate in the war on the side of the Entente, was a direct tool in the hands of French capital. It has now been established that Mussolini's first personal organ, "*People of Italy*", in which he began his propaganda, was founded with funds from French capitalists closely connected with the operations of the "Discount Bank" and interested in such colossal metallurgical enterprises as "Ansaldo" and others, which had amassed enormous capital during the war. Of the two competing influences, the Entente won, as a result of which Italy, having linked its fate with the fate of the powers of the Entente, embarked on a risky enterprise. It can now be said with confidence that this step cost Italy dearly. The Allies used Italy twice to gain an advantage on the battlefield over the coalition of the Central Powers, but they thanked her very poorly for the colossal sacrifices she had

made. The “injustice” of the Allies, who openly deceived Italy in the division of the spoils of war, was one of the strongest propaganda motives used by patriots from the fascist camp.

And yet, the cradle of fascism, which, having thrown off its patriotic mask, by the 1920s had already turned into an outright “class militia,” stubbornly defending the class privileges of the capitalists, should be recognized as agricultural Italy, where class differences were much more clearly and sharply defined than in the cities.

Anyone who has not taken a special interest in Italy can hardly suspect that this beautiful country, over which the eternally azure sky stretches, a country that is the cradle of classical poetry and art, where travelers from all corners of the earth flock, is distinguished from the socio-economic side by an amazingly complex structure and represents an intricate tangle of the most diverse forms of economic relations. In general, the entire national economy of Italy appears to be some kind of bizarre crossbreeding of completely different, sometimes very distant from each other, stages of human economic development.

According to the official census of 1911, of the 26½ million Italians over 10 years of age, more than 9 million lived by agriculture, while the factory and plant industry absorbed less than 5 million, and trade - less than 1 million. The feverish growth of individual branches of industry during the imperialist war somewhat changed this proportion, but even now agriculture continues to occupy first place among the main occupations of the adult population of Italy. Among the agricultural population of Italy, three main groups should be distinguished: landowners, tenants of various sizes, and agricultural workers. As for the first group, the war years in Italy caused approximately the same internal changes as in France and a number of other European countries. The number of small landowners has grown at the expense of large landowners, but, as before, in the south of Italy there are huge latifundia belonging to rich landowners, among whom there are many who permanently live abroad and have never seen their property in their lives. But in the north and north-east of Italy the number of landowners

has grown significantly.

Italy is not only an agricultural country par excellence, but also a country in which the most backward forms of land tenure have proved surprisingly tenacious. Thus, among the second group of the agricultural population—farmers or tenants—we find a much larger number of polovniki (who give the owner of the land, in lieu of rent, half of the harvest of grain, fruit, or vegetables) than farmers bound to the owner by a monetary lease. According to statistical data collected in 1911, there were 700,000 polovniki in Italy; 1,600 (the figures are somewhat rounded). In Italy, the Polovniki are called "metzadri". These "mezzadri", of course, in turn, according to the degree of economic well-being, are divided into several groups. The most stocky elements of them try, as quickly as possible, to get rid of their eternal dependence on their landlord and, having bought a plot of land, turn into small owners. Large tenants (especially in the south of Italy), who rent all the land from the owners of the latifundia and lease it to small farmers or peasants, are called "gabelotti". In the south, these "gabelotti" became famous for their especially shameless exploitation of peasants and farm laborers. Gradually, they managed to form a large subclass, similar in its social characteristics to our large kulaks. During the revolutionary of the storms that from time to time engulfed Italy, this class of wealthy tenants always took a hostile position towards the poorest, landless peasantry and farm laborers.

Agricultural workers or farm laborers (in Italian: braccianti, which literally means "selling hands") represent a large group of the agricultural population. According to 1911 data, agricultural workers of both sexes numbered over 4 million people.

The revolutionary economic struggle of the farm laborers and the poorest peasantry not only against the landowners, but also against the most prosperous stratum, the "mezzadri," represents a most curious page in the history of the new Italy. The economic situation of the Italian farm laborers at the beginning of the imperialist war was dismal to the last degree. For the most part, the farm laborer is not even provided with housing on the estate or farm where he works. The Braccianti are forced, in

essence, to lead a nomadic way of life. Most often, they live in the suburbs of the city or in small towns, where they return late in the evening for the night, and from where early in the morning they have to drag themselves to work, sometimes 8 or 10 miles away. The situation of the agricultural proletariat is especially hard in the south.

This is how the French publicist Maurice Pernod, who recently visited Sicily, describes the life of farm laborers or landless peasants, forced to sell their labor to landowners:

“There are absolutely no well-organized villages in Sicily, since there is no water, no roads, no police.

I have traveled on horseback or in a chaise long distances of 30-50 kilometers, encountering nothing along the way except strange farm buildings, more like fortresses, devoid of windows and surrounded by high walls. Peasants and farm laborers live in towns and travel twelve kilometers round trip every day, going to work and returning home. One must be present in the evening, when at sunset the peasants and farm laborers return to some Sicilian town, in order to properly understand the social and moral conditions in which the local agricultural population has to live.

An endless line of men and boys—the women in this formerly Muslim country do not work in the fields—passes before our eyes, and only a few of them return home on donkeys or mules, the rest go on foot. All have a gun slung over one shoulder, and on the other a jug for drinking water, which they use during their work. They also carry all the necessary tools for their work; and when they return home, they also grab a bundle of firewood, a sack of vegetables or fruit. Every evening one can observe this long line of tired people slowly returning home, loaded after a long day of work with a heavy burden and mournfully humming their native songs. In Girgenti I made an attempt to visit the miserable huts in which they live together with their donkeys, goats and chickens, but the smell in them was such that I immediately cowardly jumped out of the first one."

The Italian governments, one after the other, begin their declarations with promises to urgently carry out all the necessary reforms in the south, but usually these

same promises are the end of the matter. The Chamber passes dozens of urgent bills, issues over-budget loans, but... nothing changes for Sicily. In the same Pernod we find a number of characteristic facts on this subject:

"In the spring of 1920, traveling from Palermo to Trapani, I got into a conversation in a railway carriage with a businessman heading for Marsala, who asked me: "Have you been in Sicily for a long time?" "Twelve years," I answered. "Only twelve years?" "What a pity! So you won't find anything new with us. A few promises more, a few hopes less - that's our balance sheet. We still have nothing: no water, no highways, no railways, no police, no hygiene. We have not taken a single step along the path of civilization. And to think that in Rome there are people who stubbornly defend their rights to the possession of new territories, or at least to a protectorate over them, who claim to govern other regions, much less Italian and, moreover, much poorer than ours, in which so much should be done and in which nothing is being done. Ah, if only the Italian government would do for Sicily even a tenth of what the French have done for Tunisia"...

We will not follow Pernod's further reasoning here, for we have every reason to doubt the beneficial effects of French civilization on the Tunisian population. We will cite only the most colorful facts about Sicily: In Alcalo, a city of 40,000 inhabitants, which is the center of wine production, there is still no drinking water; the same is true of Caltaisetta, the center of sulfur mining. 500 meters from Castro-Giovanni, the author saw an old woman greedily collecting in her jug the remains of dirty rainwater preserved on the slope of a cliff. The roads are worse than in Asia Minor: they are kept in an impossible state, almost at every step they are crossed by rapid streams. The bridges carried away by these streams are never restored by anyone. The once wooded mountains are now completely bare, like desert rocks. There is almost no regular postal service anywhere... Local industry eks out a most miserable existence. In the small shops of Palermo or Syracuse, canned vegetables with an English brand are sold. In all of Sicily in 1920, there was only one plant engaged in the extraction and processing of

citric acid (in Germany there were 10), and meanwhile, in terms of the number of lemons growing in it, Sicily is the first country in the world"...

If we add to this the almost complete illiteracy of the poorest population, the ignorance that reigns among the rest of its strata, cleverly exploited by the Catholic clergy, then we can easily understand how the modern economic system of Italy, in which the most primitive forms of exploitation characteristic of the most backward countries with a patriarchal agricultural economy have been preserved, managed to turn the blessed Sicilian paradise into hell for the local population, despite its boundless endurance and hard work.

From time to time in Sicily and, in general, in the south of Italy, the flames of large agrarian uprisings flared up, but were suppressed with inexorable cruelty.

The last major uprising of the Sicilian peasantry took place under the fascist government and was directed entirely against it. Of course, the political ignorance of the Sicilian peasantry left its mark on this movement, which at first took place under very vague slogans. It is curious that in some places the peasants, driven out of patience by the oppression of the fascist government, came out with cries of: "Down with fascism, long live freedom, long live the king!" The head of the current government of Italy must feel rather strange, having covered up his entire adventure with the name of the king. From the history of the Russian revolutionary movement we know well what the ostentatious "loyalty" of the rebellious peasants is worth. This time the immediate cause of the uprising in Sicily was the complete suspension of public works in Messina, Reggio and other areas of the south by order of the fascist government. A correspondent of the socialist newspaper "Forward" described it as follows:

"Unemployment is rampant everywhere; everywhere the population suffers from acute malnutrition. Pawnshops no longer accept things as collateral because their cash is exhausted. Laundries have been out of work for months because the population cannot send their last change of linen to be washed"...

It is not difficult to understand why, despite the extreme obscurity and confusion

of the slogans put forward by the spontaneous leaders of the illiterate Sicilian population, the movement turned out to be imbued with an acute hatred of fascism.

It is no coincidence that the first spontaneous uprising against fascism was raised by the peasants. It was in the Italian village that fascism revealed its class background earlier than anywhere else. At the same time that in the cities fascist orators, carefully concealing their class physiognomy and the essence of their class aspirations, spoke exclusively with patriotic slogans, in the village, where the struggle between the peasants, on the one hand, and the landowners and their closest henchmen, on the other, was always raging, the fascists acted as open and active supporters of the landowners and the bourgeoisie.

The economic position of the peasantry in northern and central Italy, if it differed at all from that of the peasantry in the south, was very little. It should be noted that almost everywhere in Italy, to the backward forms of relations between landlords and tenants, on the one hand, and farm laborers and landless peasants, on the other, there is added the terrible scourge of unemployment, which has always given landowners the opportunity to lower wages at their own discretion. The general position of agricultural workers in Italy is best characterized by the fact that in terms of the number of labor forces emigrating from it, Italy occupies first place in Europe. The paradise sung by poets, accessible to all the parasitic tourists who come to Italy to burn their money and enjoy its beauty, has long since become too small for many millions of its working sons. And while ocean steamers, loaded with idle gentlemen and dressed-up ladies, head for the beautiful shores of Italy, Italian farm laborers, diggers and artisans, with knapsacks on their shoulders, leave their picturesque land and crawl to all corners of the world in search of work...

In 1913, i.e. just before the war, 900,000 people emigrated from Italy. This figure gives a clear idea of the role that emigration plays in the life of Italy. The majority of emigrants go to North and South America; there they spend all their best years, and only in their sixth or seventh decade do they return to their homeland, where they use the

dollars they brought with them to set up a farm, a house, and live out their last days.

But emigration resolved the issue only for those leaving. Those who remained in Italy had to wage a stubborn struggle for their existence against the landowners and the majority of farmers and tenants, who had turned into the latter's faithful dogs and the stronghold of "private property."

And if the peasant of the south, by his temperament or worldview, is a greater individualist, more religious and more susceptible to the cunning machinations of Catholic propagandists, and the peasant and farm laborer of the north are more collectivistically inclined, then they are united by a common hatred towards their age-old oppressors.

The first shoots of socialist organizations arose among the farm laborers, who lived, for the most part, in numerous and closely knit groups. In the province of Romagna, socialist leagues of farm laborers arose already in the period 1885-1890. Their first task was to regulate the distribution of labor - the only means by which in Italy it is possible to mitigate to some extent the effects of the most terrible scourge – unemployment. Gradually, the peasant leagues also took up the question of limiting the working day, introducing a uniform wage rate, and still later - the implementation of collective agreements between landowners and mezzadri, on the one hand, and agricultural workers, on the other. In the conditions of the shameless exploitation in which Italian landowners and wealthy farmers had long been accustomed to keeping their workers, these attempts to limit exploitation by means of collective agreements aroused particular hatred and bitterness against them among the employers, who in turn hastened to organize themselves into so-called “agrarian leagues”, which waged a fierce struggle against the "red leagues" of the poorest elements of the village.

The struggle between the red leagues of farm laborers and peasants and the leagues of landlords was, mainly, the soil on which fascism flourished during the years of the reaction, as the militant vanguard of the capitalist reaction, which came out in defense of the sacred rights of the owners.

It cannot be denied that the war contributed in Italy, as in a number of other European countries, to a significant transfer of landed property from the hands of the landed bourgeoisie into the hands of the peasants. The rise of revolutionary sentiment in Italy in the period 1918-1920, on the other hand, undoubtedly, through a series of partial conquests, significantly improved the situation of broad sections of the Italian village. Moreover, the downtrodden farm laborer and peasant began to develop a sense of their own dignity and the belief that, with the help of a closely knit organization, it was possible to defend both this dignity and comparatively tolerable conditions of material existence. The peasant leagues waged a decisive struggle against all kinds of strikebreaking during agricultural strikes.

To those landowners who allowed themselves to ignore the decrees of the Red Leagues, they applied the very powerful tool of boycott. The matter did not go without numerous acts of economic terror. Moreover, the press, rightly frightened by the menacing specter of the approaching social revolution, screamed to the whole world that, thanks to the dominance of the Red Leagues, being a landowner in Italy was becoming unprofitable and risky. It remained either to surrender without a fight, or to energetically oppose the work of revolutionary organizations. As we have already said, in the fascists, the Italian landowners found loyal and active executors of their will.

By that time, the bourgeois-compromising government of Italy, also frightened by the specter of social revolution, began to openly provide every possible assistance to the fascist gangs, supplying them with weapons, providing them with free transport for movement, leaving all their criminal actions unpunished.

The Royal Police, instead of combating the illegal activities of fascist gangs, at best harbored them, at worst assisted their dark plans.

Feeling their impunity and considerable strength, the fascists began a bloody reprisal against the revolutionary movement of the Italian peasantry. Their favorite method was to equip punitive expeditions to the guilty village. They usually went to such a village, accompanied by the nearest landowners, who gave them the necessary

instructions, usually at night, looked for the chairman of the local league, socialist circle, workers' or peasants' cooperative, killed them or, in the best case, severely beat them, and set fire to the premises of the league and socialist circle. All of rural Italy was flooded with blood as a result of these punitive expeditions of unbridled youths from the fascist gangs. The fascists waged a cruel war against any attempts by peasants and workers to organize a rural-khoegyaev strike. Moreover, in many places they introduced a kind of serfdom for the peasantry, forcing them to work 12-14 hours (instead of the previous 8) per day, on terms imposed on them by the landowners. In other places they forced the peasants to join local fascist leagues or fascist trade unions. During elections to parliament or local communal administrations, they threatened to force the peasants to vote for the fascists. They completely smashed the peasant and labor cooperative, transferring its property to the fascist cooperatives.

It is impossible to list all the humiliations that befell the much-suffering Italian peasantry, thanks to the mercy of the fascists. It can only be said that the domination of the fascists in the Italian village returned it to the darkest times of the Middle Ages. From this destruction of all peasant organizations the Italian village has not yet recovered.

Such convinced enemies of Italian fascism as the socialist deputy Matteotti, brutally murdered by the fascists in the summer of 1924, developed in themselves an unbounded hatred of fascism precisely because they stood too close to the Italian peasantry and its struggle against the double yoke of the fascists and the landowners.

Thus, the defeat of the revolutionary movement of the Italian peasantry, which threw it back several decades and significantly worsened its economic situation, was the first stage of the “broad” work of the fascist party.

II

The Fates of Italian Industry.—The Rise of the Labor Movement.—The Birth of Fascism in the Cities

The peculiar economic structure of Italy has been particularly marked by the deep hostility that has long existed between the representatives of agricultural industry and urban industry. We know well that the struggle between these two branches of modern capitalism exists almost everywhere, but nowhere has it reached such a sharp point as in Italy, especially before the war. In Italy this division of industry almost coincides with the geographical subdivision of the country. Between the agricultural south and the manufacturing north there has long been an extreme rivalry, almost always ending in the victory of the latter. Already from the brief sketch of Sicily given in the previous chapter it is evident how significantly the agricultural south has lagged behind the industrial north, both economically and culturally.

If we turn to the works of eminent researchers of the national economy of Italy, we will be convinced that, in addition to a number of unfavorable geographic conditions that caused this backwardness of the south, a huge role in the aggravation of this struggle between the two types of industry in Italy was played by the specific policy of Italian rulers in the last decades preceding Italy's participation in the imperialist war. Due to deeply rooted traditions, it so happened that the leaders of economic policy in Italy have long been supporters of extreme protectionism with respect to domestic industry. This means that they were, without hesitation, ready to use all the vital resources of the country to support the manufacturing industry, which in this country, deprived of coal, iron ore and other types of raw materials, could only drag out the most frail, rickety existence. It is quite clear that the entire ill-fated colonial policy of Italy, which has so far brought the Italian people only innumerable disasters, was entirely dictated by the desire of the Italian government to come to the aid of domestic industry by finding new markets for it. The reckless spending of public funds to support the rickety Italian industry brought irreparable damage not only to the regions of the south, about which they always loudly complained, but also to the entire national economy of Italy. The fierce struggle that the southern agrarians had long been waging in the press and in parliament against this government policy had not led to any results. The South

continued to be the stepson, and the North the government's favorite child. This struggle took on especially passionate forms in Italy, in connection with the government's tax policy. The landowners of the South never ceased to point out that there was absolutely no way to hide the land from taxation, while the industrialists of the North had thousands of ways of concealing their incomes - as a result of which the entire burden of taxes fell on the shoulders of the agricultural South.

However, the patronizing policy of the Italian government towards urban industry had already yielded very noticeable results by the end of the past century, expressed in its feverish growth. But, of course, this artificial growth could only be particularly intensified in the initial period of the world war. Here are some figures. In just 4 years, namely, between January 1, 1914 and January 1, 1918, 520 new joint-stock companies were created in Italy. During the same period, the fixed capital of industrial enterprises increased by 2 billion lire. The Federation of Industrialists, formed with the aim of protecting the interests of large-scale industry by pressuring the economic policy of the government, numbered about 400 large united companies in April 1918. Ahead of all other branches of urban industry, as always happens during war, of course, went the metallurgical industry. Swollen in the midst of the war itself and nurtured by profitable government orders and subsidies, the metallurgical industry of Italy - this spoiled child of the Italian government - especially those circles that were in the sphere of direct influence of the Entente and its businessmen - received the opportunity not only of extensive expansion, but also of significant improvement of the production system, internal equipment, etc. One example will suffice to outline the colossal growth of individual industrial enterprises in this industry during the war. The metallurgical firm Ansaldo (owned by the Perrone brothers), which still enjoys the exclusive favor of the government, managed to increase its capital stock from 30 to 100 million lire in 1917, and from 100 to 500 million lire in 1918. There is no need to talk about the usurious profits of all these enterprises that swelled during the war. The Italian "sharks" of wartime outdid the capitalists of all other European countries in this respect. The trials

of illegal supplies, fraudulent bookkeeping, embezzlement, concealment of profits, etc., did not cease in Italy until 1922, and only when the patriot and leader of fascism Mussolini, who had taken all the swindlers, exploiters and embezzlers under his high hand, came to power, did he force the special commission investigating their dark deeds to stop their work.

It goes without saying that directly behind the hasty "kings" of the Italian metallurgical industry stood the banks, which made every effort to ensure that the number of fictitious enterprises in Italy grew. It was important to them only to rake in colossal profits, without thinking at all about what picture the industrial life of Italy would present after demobilization.

Economic motives were mixed with purely political ones. In the banking business of Italy, the two coalitions of the warring powers openly competed with each other. While the influence of the Entente (especially French) capitalists penetrated Italy through the well-known "Discount Bank", German capital acted through the "Commercial Bank", which was under the special patronage of the then Prime Minister Giolitti, which explains the resistance they offered to the first attempts to draw Italy into the war.

As for the working class of Italy, the war brought with it a temporary improvement in its general conditions. Although emigration had almost ceased, since the army had absorbed a huge number of people, the death loop of unemployment was somewhat loosened. Wages had risen considerably, although, of course, the workers got only small crumbs from the incredible profits of the capitalists. At the same time, the imperialist war, which was not popular even among the entire Italian bourgeoisie, but only that part of it that was under the influence of the Entente banks and the newspapers they subsidized, contributed significantly to the enlightenment of the conscious of the working class. But the period of extreme tension of the labor movement in Italy coincided with the end of the war. It must be said that in general in Italy, in comparison with other European countries, the evolution of the working class took place with

exceptional speed. The growth of the syndicalist (trade union) and socialist movement did not at all correspond to the degree of development of Italian industry. However, it must be acknowledged that the artificial revival of industry during the war found some reflection in the somewhat superficial character of the labor movement itself in Italy. Since the beginning of the current century, the labor movement in this country has been corroded by two serious diseases: the great successes of the reformists, who tried to divert the labor movement from the path of irreconcilable class struggle, and the strong disunity of the extreme elements of the working class (anarchists, syndicalists and maximalists, and later - communists) among themselves, which made it difficult to create a united front against the capitalists. These two painful phenomena in the Italian labor movement are partly responsible for the dizzying success that befell Italian fascism and led it, in the end, to the seizure of state power. However, the Italian labor movement took a long, winding path to its defeat.

The end of the war was bound to bring a revival of the class struggle in Italy, for what was only an assumption on the lips of socialist agitators and propagandists, who warned of the disastrous consequences of the war for the working masses, became a fact. The war did not bring Italy what the advocates of intervention in the imperialist slaughter had promised her. Even they, who had called on the workers to go to the front in the name of the patriotic task of saving Italy, had to admit that the war had brought no economic relief. They explained this by the hypocritical behavior of the allies, who had brazenly cheated Italy in the division. But the more advanced ranks of the workers understand that the matter here is not only in the treachery of the allied diplomacy, but also in the deep class background of every war. Disappointment in the results of the war merged with gloomy forebodings and fears for the future. No one could have the slightest hope that capitalism could lead Italy out of the impasse it had created. Together with the demobilization of the military industry, the ominous specter of unemployment loomed in the air again. The workers tried to take advantage of the period of some improvement and material well-being in order to intensify the struggle, but at the top of

the labor movement, not all was well. The reformists seized more and more influence and put obstacles in the way of the struggle of the truly revolutionary elements of the proletariat at every step. Under the influence of the reformists, the Socialist Party of Italy devoted an enormous part of its forces and resources to the parliamentary struggle. The cheapest careerism made its nest in the ranks of the socialist leaders, who belonged, for the most part, to the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, who had not been able to "settle" successfully in any other industry. (Later, these socialist leaders produced a huge number of deserters to the fascist camp). The external success of reformist socialism was very significant. The reformists seized a large number of seats in municipal and community councils, in schools, cooperatives and in family homes. Meanwhile, workers' syndicates began to acquire great influence, intervening in production and controlling the entire conduct of business. The capitalists were screaming about how they were suffocating under this dominance of the socialists, complaining that workers' organizations were fining them, boycotting them, and holding their own court over the capitalists who had offended them in their eyes. Bourgeois newspapers were shedding crocodile tears about how "being a capitalist in Italy is becoming less and less profitable."

And, indeed, despite the hidden sabotage of the leaders, the Italian working class in the period 1918-1920 turned a brilliant page in the struggle against the predatory capitalism of Italy. A wave of strikes swept across half the country. In the elections to urban and rural communities, as well as to parliament, the socialist "party" gained more and more success. The workers' syndicates relentlessly pursued their "struggle for a reduction of the working day, an increase in wages, and control over production.

The class struggle in Italy reached its greatest intensity in August-September 1920.In response to the demands made by the metalworkers' syndicate, the well-known automobile company "Fiat" refused. The refusal was accompanied by a threat of a lockout. In response to this threat, the workers declared a strike, which engulfed almost the entire metallurgical industry of the north and led,eventually, to the workers seizing factories and plants in these cities. The victory of the proletariat in Russia and the gains

of the October Revolution had by that time found a lively response in Italy. Despite the influence of the reformists, the attitude of the working masses toward the October Revolution was enthusiastic. The insurgent workers tried to use the experience of our October during the seizure of factories. First of all, they organized the protection of the factories themselves and the raw material reserves they had. Then, they organized the exchange of raw materials between individual factories and plants; they came to an agreement regarding joint work with the senior technical personnel of the enterprises, who, unlike the Russian intelligentsia, almost unanimously expressed a desire to work hand in hand with the proletariat; they also organized the reception of orders from various departments and individuals. In a word, all measures were taken to ensure that the seizure of factories and plants did not serve, even at first, as a cause of industrial ruin in the country. But, unfortunately, this entire experience did not last long. The then Prime Minister Giolitti, famous for his treacherous attitude toward the workers, with the open assistance of the socialist reformists, managed to disrupt the movement, which had attracted the attention of the entire world and promised magnificent results. As soon as the movement had engulfed a number of factories and plants, Giolitti conceived his ingenious plan, deciding at first not to resort to violence. The entire business of seizing factories and plants was accompanied by only a small number of armed clashes between representatives of the authorities and the workers. Giolitti chose a different path - lengthy negotiations and behind-the-scenes machinations. On the one hand, having received support in the camp of the reformists, who used all their eloquence to prove to the workers the folly of the business they had undertaken, he managed to force the workers to agree to the promised control over production, as the best outcome of the struggle that had unfolded. Giolitti did not waste the time spent on negotiations and intrigues. He used it to urgently strengthen the military-police apparatus of Italy and, thus, when it came to the final stage of negotiations, the workers saw themselves forced to come to an agreement with the employer, since the government on their side had by that time already turned out to be significantly stronger than them.

The movement of August-September 1920, disrupted by the provocative activity of the reformists, can be considered the beginning of the decline of the workers' movement and, at the same time, the moment of the birth of Italian fascism in the cities. But the leaders of fascism took into account the fact that in the cities of Italy they would have to deal with a much more conscious and organized enemy than the peasantry in the villages. They understood that in the cities they would have to do an enormous "work" to smash the large proletarian organizations. They understood that only a completely bled-white proletariat of Italy would allow them to rule in Italy as in a conquered country. And they began this work of smashing the urban workers' organizations, hiding behind the flag of Italian nationalism in the first period of their activity.

III

Fascism under the guise of patriotism. - The controversy over Fium. - The role of D'Annunzio. - Military-patriotic organizations

The complaints of Italian patriots about the unfair division of the spoils of the Entente as a result of the world war have long since become proverbial. And if they sometimes suffer from exaggeration, still, examining this question from the most objective point of view, it is necessary to admit that the sacrifices made by Italy, as well as the proportion of its participation on the side of the Entente, were very insufficiently compensated. Military experts assert that the fate of France and other members of the Entente was first saved by Italy on August 2, 1914, when she first declared her neutrality. It is difficult to determine what the consequences would have been if Italy had joined the Central Powers, with whom she was bound by the Triple Alliance! The statement of Italy gave France the opportunity to concentrate its forces on the northern front and ensure its success on the Marne. Italy's intervention on the side of the Deja Vu in May 1915 prevented the Central Powers from using the military-technical assistance of the Austrian army. We must recall the slogans with which Italy entered the war on the side of the Entente. The main slogan seemed to be the implementation of the old

"Adriatic program"[1]. The second slogan was the desire to correct the Italo-Austrian and Italo-German borders along national lines. The propaganda of irredentism, which had made its nest in Trieste, Fiume and other areas with a mixed population in northern Italy, played a significant role in the political life of Italy and was skillfully used as one of the motives for inciting Italy to war. The disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was already part of the plans of the allies from the very beginning of the war, and therefore the third slogan of Italian diplomacy was to secure the borders of Italy from future new state formations.

All three of these slogans were not actually implemented as a result of the world war. Trieste, Istria, Zara, Gorizia, etc., with adjacent areas were annexed to Italy as a result of the Versailles and Saint-Germain treaties, the main milestones of which were already outlined in the secret London agreement of the Allies in 1915. After a long dispute with Yugoslavia, the question of Fiume was also seemingly resolved. By an agreement concluded between both countries at the beginning of 1925, the borders of Italy were appropriately secured and corrected. However, the “Adriatic program” of the Italian patriots remains unfulfilled to this day, and little Albania, after the end of the World War, inflicted great damage on their self-esteem when it forced them to vacate occupied Wallonia in 1920.

Already by the end of the world war it was obvious that even if all the slogans put forward by Italian diplomacy, which pursued purely political goals and brought almost no improvement in its economic situation, were fully implemented, Italy, officially listed among the victors, would have to consider the world war lost: so great is the discrepancy between the victims suffered by Italy (the almost completely devastated northern region of Veneto and the enormous number of those out of action killed and wounded) and the insignificant gains with which the Allies rewarded her. If America had suffered, in proportion to its population, the same number of victims as Italy, then it would have to lose 16 million killed and out of action!

1 A program that aims to take over the entire coast of the Adriatic Sea.

It should be noted that Italian diplomacy did not show any particular talent in ending the world war. Of course, given the economic and political situation in which Italy found itself, it would hardly have been able to force its allies to take it into account by the strength and talents of its diplomats alone. But nevertheless, at the international conference, Italian diplomats showed their complete inability. One of the participants in the Paris Peace Conference, Tardieu, recently recounted in his memoirs the subordinate role played by Italian diplomats at that conference: “The Italian delegate Orlando spoke very little in general. Conversations were conducted mainly by three people: Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George. If Orlando spoke about anything, it was exclusively about the ill-fated Fiume.”

Mussolini cleverly used this inability of Italian diplomacy for his own purposes at the very beginning of his activity. Hiding behind a patriotic desire to exalt Italy, the first founders of the fascist party and their "theoreticians" declared that it was their task to correct all the diplomatic failures of previous Italian politicians, bordering on outright treason. In particular, Mussolini speculated most of all on the question of Fiume. In this direction, he was greatly assisted by the famous Italian poet D'Annunzio, who was always distinguished by a penchant for all sorts of madness.

Patriotic chatterboxes, of whom D'Annunzio was one of the most prominent representatives, managed to create such a fog around this question that for a long time it became one of the most central points of Italy's foreign and domestic policy. In fact, the importance of Fiume for Italy is not so great. To begin with, during the London Conference of the Allies in 1915, it did not occur to any of the European statesmen to attach special importance to this question. The patriotic uproar mentioned above led to this city, with a population of 50,000 and a trade turnover of 2 million tons, serving alternately as a bone of contention between Italy and America (Wilson aroused the hatred of Italian patriots by speaking out against the annexation of Fiume to Italy), and between Italy and Yugoslavia. At one time, the dispute between the two countries was resolved by the city of Fiume being transformed into an independent state. However, the

notorious legions of the patriot D'Annunzio, having entered Fiume, dispersed the Constituent Assembly, which was sitting in the city, and proclaimed the mad poet dictator. The unfortunate city had to endure a lot from the dictatorial rule of d'Annunzio, who, in the end, under pressure from the royal troops, had to leave there along with his patriotic bands. Then, from about 1921, the Fiume question became the subject of lengthy diplomatic negotiations between the two countries, which ended only at the beginning of 1925. Both negotiating parties recognized that the "independent state of Fiume" henceforth ceased to exist. The city of Fiume was transferred to Italy. Yugoslavia was given, in addition to the city of Sussac, which had been transferred to it earlier, the port of Baros and the delta of the Eneo with the adjacent areas, which constituted the outskirts of Fiume. A number of other small agreements of an economic nature were concluded, connected with the Fiume question. At the present time, the Fiume question, as such, no longer exists. There is no doubt that the current Prime Minister of Italy, stubbornly seeking a solution to this question, was pursuing purely political goals. After all, Fiume was the patriotic banner under whose shadow fascism first entered the arena of Italian life as a highly patriotic movement. Under this banner Mussolini acted together with d'Annunzio – until fascism threw off its false patriotic mask and revealed itself as an obviously reactionary movement aimed at perpetuating the capitalist system and enslaving the proletariat. Here the paths of Mussolini and d'Annunzio diverged. As soon as Mussolini achieved power, he disbanded d'Annunzio's legions and forced his organizations to go underground. Mussolini used the Fiuman banner to attract invalids and. former war veterans (the "mutilati" and "combattenti") who continued to burn with the "sacred flame" of pseudo-patriotism. Mussolini recruited the first cadres of his party from their ranks. The fascist organizations attracted petty-bourgeois and, in part, working-class youth who had been in the war and were poisoned by the suffocating gases of patriotism. Many of them, when they joined the party, were completely unaware of its reactionary character, which was revealed later. Of course, there were also many conscious renegades who took revenge on the Socialist Party for personal insults or a

failed career and consciously took on the role of the fall of the working class...

Thus, Italian fascism began its struggle under the slogan of “great patriotic goals.” From here it was not difficult for it to subsequently move to other positions.

Fascism began its propaganda with the assertion defended by every military party, namely, that the country, despite the end of the war, must still keep its fighting power ready. However, a successful struggle for patriotic goals is conceivable only if the class struggle between workers and masters ceases, in other words, if the interests of the nation are "placed ahead" of the interests of classes. People who preach class struggle and increase discord "among Italians" - that is, maximalists, communists, anarchists - are enemies of their fatherland and people. The most decisive struggle must be waged against them. If the government does not have sufficient energy to protect the integrity of the state mechanism from the attacks of revolutionaries, patriots must take this up and be able to oppose their personal energy and courage to the treacherous inaction of the government. If the government does not have the necessary forces and resources for this, patriots will be able to create their own organizations, and all the "well-intentioned elements" of the country, i.e., manufacturers, landowners, bankers, shipbuilders, shopkeepers, and the well-to-do intelligentsia, will devote their resources and talents to this. In time, these patriotic organizations will be able to turn into a sufficiently formidable force to instill fear not only in the internal but also in the external enemy. It may become the force that, by impressing the Entente, will force it to make diplomatic concessions to Italy in the sense of correcting unjust treaties. At the very beginning, these patriotic organizations must set as their task a persistent struggle against all elements that take the standpoint of class struggle. They must openly stand up for the defense of order and property.

IV

Benito Mussolini as the founder of fascism

Socialist opponents of all kinds and shades exist, as is well known, in all

countries, but nowhere can they be found in such overwhelming abundance as in Italy. Participation in the socialist movement during its heyday at one time became the best way for representatives of the intelligentsia to make a political career. A well-written letter and a speech delivered at a meeting almost always ensured socialist candidates success in elections, and, consequently, a seat in parliament or a municipality. It is clear that the political career of these gentlemen never had anything in common with devotion to the interests of the working class. Whoever of them, due to personal experiences and some other reasons, became disillusioned with the socialist movement, fluttered with the ease of a butterfly to the other camp and became one of the leaders of the patriots.

The current leader of fascism, who holds the post of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Italy, Benito Mussolini, is precisely one of such people. He devoted his entire youth to serving the working class and was considered one of the most gifted leaders of the socialist party. In any case, he occupied the position of editor-in-chief of the party organ. Due to disagreements with some comrades on the editorial board and with the movement in general, Mussolini leaves the party and by the beginning of the world war turns into an ardent patriot, who greatly contributed to the involvement of Italy in the world slaughter. In order to confirm his preaching by personal example, Mussolini goes to the front, but here he occupies a very modest position as a teacher of military chemistry courses. During practical training with soldiers, Mussolini was wounded by shrapnel from an accidentally exploding shell, after which he returned to his permanent place of residence, Milan, where he continued his patriotic preaching as a distinguished veteran. It is worth dwelling on this insignificant episode from the biography of Mussolini, if only because his admirers too often mention the "high military merits" of their leader. It is interesting that the unusual vanity of this man, which served as the main reason for his apostasy, had long been striking to those who had to come into close contact with him. Thus, back in 1912, i.e., three years before Italy entered the war, the famous theoretician of revolutionary syndicalism Georges Sorel said the following about him: "Mussolini is not a Socialist of the usual type. Believe me, you

may yet one day see him at the head of some sacred battalion, saluting the Italian flag with his sword. He is a typical condottieri of the 15th century. No one really knows him yet."

Georges Sorel's prediction came true almost completely.

Having cynically betrayed his comrades in the struggle and the entire working class, Mussolini turned away from the red flag and slavishly bowed before the tricolor national flag of Italy.

Mussolini, with the help of renegades like himself, attempted to transform his personal disappointment in the ideas of socialism and especially in revolutionary Marxism into a special theory that subordinated the idea of class struggle to the notorious “love of the fatherland and national pride.”

This theory has received the loud name of fascism in our time. This word originates from "fascio". This was the name of the first patriotic cells, with the organization of which Mussolini and his friends began their activities. The word "fascio" has long been widespread in the Italian labor movement. But once, back in the period of the First International, "fascio" was the name given to revolutionary workers' organizations. The blacksmith Alexander Mussolini, the biological father of the current fascist leader, at one time one of the most active propagandists of the First International, founded many such revolutionary cells - "fascii" in his homeland. Fate would have it that the son of Alexander Mussolini became the organizer of such "fascios", which cannot be called anything else than the robber nests of the enemies of the working class.

We have already noted that two periods should be distinguished in the development of Italian fascism. In the initial period of their activity, the Italian fascists tried to instill in the working masses of Italy the idea that they were fighters for raising the external prestige of Italy and reviving its high national traditions. During the revolutionary ferment of 1920 described above, the fascists, the first groups of which were organized by Mussolini in the spring of 1919, took a rather benevolent neutrality towards the insurgent workers. Only in one place did a small clash occur between

strikers and overly ardent fascists. We have already seen that Giolitti was unable to rely on the help of the urban fascists in suppressing the movement.

But very soon Mussolini breaks with romantic nonsense and quite openly takes on the role of pacifier of workers and peasants rebelling against capitalist oppression.

Founded in the spring of 1919 and led from the very beginning by Mussolini, the Fascist Party had grown so much by the beginning of 1921 that it began, on the one hand, to lay claim to a significant number of seats in parliament, and, on the other, was increasingly turning into a powerful military organization that would not allow the "weak government" to indulge the revolutionary movement, but would take into its own hands the unofficial, but actual, governance of the country.

The first baptism of fire of fascism should be considered the already described above performance of the fascists in the Ferrara and Bologna provinces, where with their help the landowners managed to break the resistance of the rebellious peasants.

Over time, the fascists began their actions against workers' organizations in the cities. Already at the beginning of 1921, the secretary of the Socialist Party, Matteotti, who was brutally murdered by the fascists in 1924, spoke in parliament with a report in which he listed all the atrocities committed by the fascists in Italy. The leaders of fascism, obviously, could never forgive Matteotti for this report, which was the first sharp public exposure of the bandit activities of the fascist party... By the beginning of 1921, the fascists finally threw off their patriotic mask and declared open battle against the working masses of Italy. They no longer declare as nests of seditiousness only peasant and farm laborer leagues, but also workers' syndicates, people's houses, cooperatives, sections, socialist circles, anarchist groups, cultural and educational circles, youth organizations, editorial boards of left-wing press organs, etc. In their stubborn and blind persecution of everything that is in one way or another connected with the independent activity of the masses, the fascists make no distinction between revolutionary-minded socialists, communists, syndicalists and anarchists, on the one hand, and moderate reformists, on the other.

Thanks to the enormous successes of reformist ideas in Italy, already noted by us above, it happened that in some places the reformists provoked no less repression against themselves than the revolutionaries. However, they persecuted both with the same inexorability and cruelty, taking advantage of the open assistance that the bourgeois-compromising governments of Italy, the royal court and the General Staff always gave to the fascists, not to mention the gentle subsidy from domestic capital. By this time, complete agreement had been established among the hitherto hostile agrarians and industrialists regarding fascism. With the exception of a certain number of "liberal" industrialists and bankers who stood for the constitutional method of government - precisely because, in their opinion, the constitutional form of government ensures the stability of the capitalist system to a much greater extent - both of them, as soon as they understood that fascism was an open instigator of the propertied classes, equally jealously guarding everything that was in one way or another connected with the sacred property and the inviolability of their privileges, began to give it every possible support.

Beginning in 1921, fascism openly transformed itself into a party of organized provocateurs and strikebreakers, whose only task was to disrupt the workers' movement.

V

The program of the fascist party. - Fascist syndicalism

We understand, in general, that various idealistic factors, for example, the personal influence or energy of individuals, could play only a subordinate role in the development of Italian fascism, but to the extent to which a human personality can influence the development of the historical path of a given people or class, the extraordinary personality of Mussolini, in terms of physical energy and extraordinary persistence, really did extend its exceptional influence. For fascism, the former socialist and editor of the central party organ, Mussolini was not only a great advertisement, but also a man who put all his efforts into strengthening and organizing the fascist party. Many of his comrades, the so-called fascists of the "first call," were against the

transformation of the fascist movement into a strictly centralized and organized political party. They were afraid that even the statutes of a fascist party could tie them hand and foot and limit their freedom of pogrom. They covered up all these fears with loud rhetoric on the theme that any movement that takes legal organizational forms loses its revolutionary character. Mussolini's first attempt to transform fascism into a political party competing for parliamentary seats with other bourgeois parties aroused great opposition among the wild minds of the founders of fascism. But Mussolini knows how to rule his party. All those who spoke out against him in the ranks of fascism itself end up, for the most part, being thrown out of the movement in the worst case, and in the best case, losing their popularity and being systematically hounded in the columns of fascist officialdom, in which Mussolini and his brother have always enjoyed the greatest influence. From the very first days of the fascist movement, Mussolini's speeches reflected the firm intention of transforming fascism into an organized bourgeois party first, and into a ruling one later. Of all the fascist leaders, Mussolini most persistently strove for the organizational unification of the fascists scattered in all corners of Italy and the elaboration of a national statute or party program.

If we pay attention to the preface written by Mussolini to the "Statutes of the National Fascist Party", this will not only clarify his intentions, but will also help us to cast a retrospective glance at the development of fascism as an organized political party. Since the preface to the program was written by Mussolini in December 1921, it therefore represents the result of the "ideological" evolution of fascism during the first three years of its existence.

In this preface, Mussolini notes that the programmatic slogans of the first group of fascism were quite simple: having avenged the failures of the intervention, expand the achievements of victory, fight against Bolshevism.

"Towards the end of 1920," writes Mussolini, "Italian fascism begins to acquire the dimensions of a gigantic national movement. This development, which has the character of lightning and miracles, has clearly manifested itself during the current year,

which could be called the year of fascism - since the whole political life of Italy - from parliament to the streets and newspapers - was almost obsessed with fascism."

Hence, in Mussolini's opinion, the necessity arose of trying, having realized the full political responsibility of flism, to create a program.

Mussolini complains in his preface about the extraordinary difficulty in any program of reconciling theory with practice (we understand that for the fascists, who were not engaged in anything other than robberies, punitive expeditions, beatings and the destruction of national and party institutions, this task turned out to be especially delicate) - that is why Mussolini himself is ready to admit that the fascist program and its charter, in the form in which they are currently in effect, least of all resemble a masterpiece.

Hence, in Mussolini’s opinion, the need arose to try, having realized the full political responsibility of flirtation, to create a program. Mussolini complains in his preface about the extraordinary difficulty in any program of reconciling theory with practice (we understand that for the fascists, who were not engaged in anything other than robberies, punitive expeditions, beatings and the destruction of national and party institutions, this task turned out to be especially delicate) - that is why Mussolini himself is ready to admit that the fascist program and its charter, in the form in which they are currently in effect, least of all resemble a masterpiece.

"There is hardly any need," says Mussolini, "to declare that the fascist program is not a dogmatic theory that does not allow any discussion of its points. Our program is in constant revision and reworking. It is subject to continuous revision. The only way to make it viable is precisely in this."

And then Mussolini gets on his favorite hobbyhorse, proving that the whole point of the fascist program is the "moral preparation" of its members. He prudently points out that this moral preparation comes down to training in revolver shooting and the ability to wield a pointed baton, but proudly declares:

"We are wise enough to refrain from asserting that the salvation of Italy depends

solely on the implementation of our program. We do not suffer from this absurd mania of grandeur. The fascist program is a serious, honest program, looking far ahead and alien to demagogic slogans. It does not avoid specific tasks (of course, this specific work of the fascists was felt on their backs by the working masses of all Italy, against whom the entire pogrom activity of the fascists is directed), it even goes as far as the smallest statistical studies, but at the same time it rises to a complete idea of Italy, for which with Vittorio Geno (the victory over the Austrians, with which the fascists do not cease to fuss, as if with a written bag, even to this day) a new period of its history begins."

Mussolini, who had obviously long ago outlined in his own plans the further course of the party's activities, ends his preface with a couple of very vague diplomatic phrases:

"A great mission and a great responsibility stand before the Italian fascists. Fascism is penetrating ever deeper into the life of the nation. It is useless to dwell in advance on the future development of the fascist movement."

All of Mussolini's subsequent activities give full grounds to assume that these words were written by a man who had already decided that in order to save Italy he needed to take the post of prime minister!

If we want to briefly convey the main content of the fascist program, we will get the following series of provisions:

1. The state, in the eyes of fascists, appears to be the legal embodiment of the nation. Therefore, political adoptions of the country are acceptable forms for them only insofar as national values find expression and protection in them.

2. The competence of the Parliament includes a number of problems which, in fact, should be subject to the competence of special technical meetings and, consequently, the rights and functions currently granted to the Parliament by the Italian Constitution should be significantly limited.

3. The state must be sovereign, its sovereignty cannot and should not be affected, which, in turn, must enjoy complete freedom in its activities.

As for the workers' syndicates (trade unions) established by the fascist party in a number of branches of industry, from which they managed to oust the revolutionary trade unions by means of threats and violence, the main program of their activity consists of the struggle for partial economic gains for the workers, but on one condition: that the struggle for these gains be conducted not along the lines of class struggle, but, on the contrary, proceed from the principle of solidarity between individual classes for the purpose of the triumph of the national principle.

The entire program of the fascist party for the labor movement is permeated with exactly the same spirit.

Thus, point 5, dedicated to the labor policy of the fascist party, states:

5. The fascist program puts forward the following positive demands in favor of workers and employees: a) a state law sanctioning an 8-hour working day — however, with possible deviations caused by urgent needs of the factory industry or agriculture; b) social legislation guaranteeing workers security against decrepitude and the consequences of accidents (again with the proviso: insofar as the interests of production are not harmed by this); c) representation of workers in the management of each enterprise, limited to the area concerning the personnel of the enterprise, etc.

As for the financial and economic program of fascism, it is set out in the following points:

6. Development of small property in all those areas of economic activity in which this can lead to their greater productivity.

9. In the area of financial policy and the economic revival of the country, the fascists intend to achieve: a) the improvement of the state balance by reducing the composition of administrative bodies and the strictest economy in their expenditures; b) the reduction of any subsidies or privileges from the state to consortiums, industry, cooperatives and other enterprises that have proven incapable of independent existence (below we will see that Mussolini began the implementation of this point with... the opposite, namely, with the provision of subsidies to bankrupt manufacturers); c)

simplification of the tax apparatus and redistribution of taxes without granting benefits to one category or another (i.e., abolition of the proportional principle in the tax system and imposition of the same tax burden on capitalists and workers, landowners and farm laborers); c) reduction of public works, organized, for the most part, for reasons of an electoral nature (in other words, reduction of the fight against unemployment and all the suffering that this disaster brings to the working class of Italy).

We will omit a number of points of the financial and economic program, the obvious meaning of which lies in settling accounts with the parties that were in power before it passed to the fascists, and we will limit ourselves to citing only the most important principle, which best characterizes the physiognomy of the fascists as open mercenaries of big capital. This point reads: "the desire to transfer the telephone and railways into the hands of private entrepreneurs, as well as the rejection of the monopolies of the post and telegraph in the spirit that private initiative could carry out and, if necessary, completely replace the state service" (this is the only point of the economic program that Mussolini hastened to implement with extraordinary speed as soon as power was in his hands).

10. The most prominent section in the entire fascist program is the section entitled "Basic Provisions of Social Policy." Briefly, it boils down to the following: "The state recognizes the social functions of private property"... "The National Fascist Party strives for a system that, by encouraging personal initiative and energy, promotes the accumulation of national wealth with an absolute rejection of all complicated, expensive, anti-economic machinations associated with nationalization, socialization, municipalization, etc."

We will not dwell on the points devoted to foreign policy. The foreign program of fascism is clear from the previous essay on the history of fascism. Several empty and stupid phrases contained in these points nevertheless attract attention: "Fascism does not believe in the viability of the League of Nations or the red, white and yellow internationals." Or: "It is necessary to ennoble the diplomatic corps of Italy, which is

entrusted with the defense of the greatness of Italy"...

As for the internal program, it is also unnecessary to talk about it. The history of the endless fascist atrocities that stained the fields and cities of Italy with the blood of workers, and set out, for example, in such a publication as the 400-page book published by the socialist newspaper Forward and representing only a bare list of fascist atrocities - is the best characterization of the "internal program" of the fascists.

VI

Organizational structure of the party. - Fascist militia

The National Fascist Party is governed by the following bodies: 1) National Council, 2) Central Committee, 3) Board, 4) General Secretariat.

The primary form of fascist organization is the so-called "links" (fascio), i.e. groups of fascists numbering no fewer than twenty members. Links are also called party sections. Where there are not twenty members, smaller groups called subsections can be formed. At the head of each link is a manager and a political secretary. Links in each province are united into provincial federations, which, in turn, maintain contact with each other.

The National Council of the Party is made up of members of the central committee and political secretaries nominated by the provincial federations. It is the organ that controls the activities of the fascist links at the local level. The National Council usually meets once every six months, but can also be convened in an emergency.

The Central Committee of the Party is elected by the national congresses, and its powers are valid between two congresses. The main task of the Central Committee is the general direction of the Party's activities. The Central Committee instructs the localities, gives directives to the parliamentary faction, and takes the necessary disciplinary measures against individual members and Party organs. The Central Committee is also the only Party organ called upon, on the basis of the resolutions of the congresses, to

formulate certain programmatic provisions, as well as to make those rapid changes in the activities of the Fascist Party that may be required between congresses. The Committee meets once every three months, not counting extraordinary cases. In order to quickly carry out its work, the Central Committee also makes use of the Party Board and the General Secretariat. The party leadership enjoys the same rights in all fields, with the exception of the establishment of norms of a political nature, as the central committee, and, like it, is elected by the national congress. The general secretariat consists of the general secretary of the party, two political vice-secretaries, one administrative secretary, not counting the technical staff. The general secretary of the party is usually appointed by the central committee on the proposal of the leadership. He is in constant direct dependence on both of these instances, gives directives to the local delegates, the secretaries of the provincial federations and individual links, selects and recruits propagandists and is responsible for the disciplined work of the entire service personnel of the party.

Such are the general features of the fascist party structure. It would be too burdensome and perhaps useless for the reader to become familiar with the more detailed structure of local cells, provincial federations, etc., etc. Let us simply note that in each local nexus there are also so-called "competence groups". These groups aim at uniting the most intelligent and capable local fascists, so as, as the party statutes state, to make it possible to study any problem - political, economic, social, of interest to the entire nation or only to a given locality, province, or commune. These groups study each such question in a preliminary manner and are something like learned experts in the assembly... of the local nexus's thugs. The group has no right to put questions on the agenda if there is no preliminary conclusion on it from the “competent group”.

It is much more interesting to learn how the military forces of the fascists were organized, which ensured their victory over the Fact government in the autumn of 1922.

The main cell of the fascists' fighting power was the so-called "combat cadres". We cite here those points of the fascist program that relate to the formation of these

cells:

1. Each group is obliged to construct combat cadres for the sole purpose of preventing violence on the part of opponents and defending, at the request of the highest organs of the party, the most important interests of the nation.

2. All fascists are included in the combat cadres. The Chief Inspectorate of Personnel must issue orders in a timely manner for the purpose of better utilization of all elements of the combat cadres. Each combat detachment is assembled under the banner assigned to it.

3. Each combat unit elects from among itself, in agreement with the leadership of its unit, one commander.

4. Where there are several cadres, the commanders of individual detachments indicate to the board of the liaison of one main commander.

5. In political terms, the cadres are subordinate to the leadership of each group; in disciplinary terms, to their commander.

6. All combat cadres obey orders coming from the main inspection, organized under the Party Secretariat.

7 The cadres and their links constitute one indivisible whole, therefore the construction of autonomous groups, rivalry between authorities, etc. should not be allowed.

A mixture of the empty rhetoric, braggadocio, hypocrisy and cynicism characteristic of fascists is the so-called "disciplinary regulations" of the fascist militia. It is, however, too extensive to be presented to readers in its entirety, but it is still interesting to become familiar with the individual sections of this regulation. The following points are characteristic:

1. The fascist party always represents the militia.

2. The Fascist militia is in the service of God and the Italian Fatherland. It takes the following oath: "In the name of God and Italy and in the name of all those who have fallen in battles for the greatness of Italy, I swear to dedicate myself exclusively and

without reservation to the good of Italy."

Points 3, 4, 5 and 6 speak of the extraordinary valor of the fascist warrior, which always keeps him from compromises, and of discipline, which is equally obligatory for both the officer and the soldier of the fascist militia.

Point 7, which contains high-flown discussions about the “morality” of the fascist warrior, is worth quoting in full:

"The philistine soldier has his own special morality, peculiar to him alone. (And how could he! The peasants and workers, whose homes have been set on fire or destroyed, their wives and children, not to mention themselves, beaten half to death, cannot doubt this!) The prescriptions of general morality, concerning the family, political and social relations, have no meaning for him. For him, as for the knights of old, the only law is honor - a law that leads a man higher and higher along the path of perfection, which nevertheless remains unattainable for him - an almighty, severe law, bordering on absolute justice and obligatory for him even when he speaks against the formal, written law, which always stands below him."

No less characteristic is the 10th point, clearly revealing the fact that the main goal of the fascists was always the fight against the internal class enemy (peasants and workers), and not against the external one, the ceremonial tirades addressed to which were only supposed to serve as a diversion. The fact is that, according to the charter, the fascist militia expels from its ranks the unclean, the unworthy and traitors.

Point 10 explains who should be considered unclean:

"... Also considered unclean is the one who shows any weakness of character, who does not use all the means at his disposal for a courageous attack on the internal, open or secret, enemies of Italy, the one who fails to stand in the fight against these enemies on the principle of life for life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, arson for arson, a blow for a blow, a wound for a wound, the one in whom faith is shaken in the slightest, in whose soul the slightest skepticism or doubt is introduced at the moment when the military action has already been undertaken," etc.

But, of course, the material power of the fascist militia did not consist in these points about a peculiar fascist morality, discipline, medieval chivalry, etc. (although, with the help of these concepts, they managed to fool a large cadre of young people - not only of landowner, but sometimes of petty bourgeois and even working class origin), but in the real support that the fascist militia received from the government and the propertied classes. It is no longer a secret to anyone that the fascists had many of their own generals in the War Ministry and the General Staff, who supplied them with the necessary weapons at any time, handed over to them all the contents of the regular army warehouses. Many officers and generals of the regular army at the same time - out of patriotism or a desire to supplement their earnings - served in the fascist militia, where they, of course, were awarded higher ranks and paid larger salaries. Such generals and officers, of course, never thought about where their functions as regular army officials ended and their party duties as fascists began. They were the ones who represented the true power of the fascist militia. It is enough to recall what a huge role General Diaz, later the Minister of War, played in the fascist militia. The civil authorities, of course, did not refuse the fascists their benevolent assistance either. The carabinieri, the royal guard and the secret police always, on the orders of the governments that served them, gave the fascists active support. If any skirmish between fascists and leftists occurred in a village, the guilty fascists were almost never found by the police; the leftists, however, were always found and handed over to the judicial authorities or themselves arrested. In the event of an attack on a given area by a punitive expedition organized by the fascist militia, the local police at best maintained a "noble" neutrality, but usually provided all possible support to the pogromists. The behavior of the local authorities was especially evident during elections, when the fascist militia sometimes managed to keep an entire district under siege and instill panic in the population until the elections ended in their favor.

And yet, to give credit to the energy and ingenuity of the leaders of fascism, they managed to use some of the psychological characteristics of the Italian people, such as

their love of beautiful and lavish spectacles, to increase their popularity in the country.

In the fascist militia, the very division into "legions" and "centurions" was borrowed from the Roman army. The honor is rendered by the fascist soldiers and commanders, also according to the Roman model. The fascists transferred to their militia everything that was theatrical and pompous in the Roman army. The banners and insignia of individual small units ("gaillard detti") are always colorful and attract the gaze of onlookers. Music plays an exceptional role "in the campaigns" of the fascists, as do wild warlike and not always understandable cries. The black shirts in which the fascist soldiers are dressed must represent at the same time an emblem of simplicity, modesty and stern determination.

The fascists, it must be admitted, are great masters of all sorts of theatrical performances, parades, splendid maneuvers, etc. Their ceremonial performances differ sharply from their everyday pogrom work, and at the very moment when somewhere in a remote village they beat up defenseless members of the peasant league, often smearing their faces with soot after the execution and leading the unfortunates with a rope around their necks along the main streets of the villages, they know how to organize lavish celebrations somewhere in Rome or Milan to mark the three hundredth anniversary of Dante's birth and recite at them bombastic verses in which they prove that Dante was... the forerunner of modern fascism!

VII

The Rise of Fascism.— “Black October”

The beginning of 1922 must be recognized as the era of the greatest flourishing of the fascist movement. The industrial crisis, which significantly worsened after the war, gave rise to unemployment, devalued the Italian lira, and led to the economic impotence and exhaustion of the working class. The industrial bourgeoisie considered this moment very convenient for an attack on the working class. Factories and plants began to close everywhere, and in the enterprises that continued to operate, a fierce struggle was waged

to take away from the workers those gains that they had achieved during the years of revolutionary upsurge. In a number of industrial cities, the capitalists declared a lockout; everywhere, a shameless purge of enterprises of revolutionary elements was carried out. The fascists penetrated everywhere. The speeches of their speakers became more and more daring. They annulled the electoral successes of the socialists in a number of cities and communities with their pogromous actions. Their influence in parliament grew; they developed strong competition with the left parties in the ranks of the trade union movement, having set about the widespread planting of yellow syndicates. Not all those who went into the fascist syndicates were traitors to the workers' movement. This could be especially observed in the Italian countryside. After the defeat of a number of large peasant uprisings, fascist terror began to reign supreme in the Italian countryside. In some localities, such as, for example, in the province of Mantua, the fascists succeeded in restoring serfdom. The fascists were not satisfied with this. They tried to penetrate into the very thick of the everyday interests of the peasantry and farm laborers and into their relations with local landowners and tenants, and also to use temporary contradictions between the interests of the workers of two neighboring regions to their advantage. The fascists resorted, for example, to the following methods: let us assume that a strike of agricultural workers has been declared in a given region; the landowners, of course, immediately turn to the fascists for assistance. The fascists equip a punitive expedition and try to pacify the strikers on the spot, but if they do not succeed, they, in the same composition, in the same landowners' trucks, armed with the assistance of the nearest garrison, set off for the neighboring provinces, where not only is there no strike, but where the farm laborers are waiting for work. They drive these farm laborers under their own escort to the area where the strike is taking place and force them to play the role of strikebreakers. It is fair to say that the fascists did not always have to resort to violence in such cases. Exhausted by long unemployment, seeing no ray of light, the downtrodden farm laborers were not always inclined to direct their thoughts toward class solidarity. In this way, the fascists often managed to simultaneously achieve two

goals: they saved the landowners from the grim consequences of the agricultural strike, and in the eyes of the starving unemployed people they often acquired the aura of selfless benefactors. The main advantage of the fascist party was that they succeeded in sowing discord and hostility among the workers, whose solidarity could only promise their own party death and disintegration. The fascists succeeded in carrying out such experiments not only in the villages but also in the cities. Of course, those most backward and downtrodden elements of the urban proletariat whom they managed to lure into their syndicates did not care in the least about the ideology of fascist syndicalism, which consists in denying the class struggle and replacing it with solidarity between entrepreneurs and workers. They could be attracted there only by petty temporary advantages. Temporary success in the working class environment is explained by approximately the same reasons. If in the south of Italy the success of the Popular Catholic Party can be attributed to the religious obscurantism that still prevails among the ignorant peasantry, then in the north and in the center the success of Catholic propaganda among the workers is explained mainly by the fact that the Popular Catholic Party energetically defended the always petty economic demands of the workers and, at the same time, rebelled against fascist brutality. It should be noted that during the heyday of the fascist movement, with the exception of the revolutionary parties (socialists, communists and anarchists), of all the bourgeois parties in Italy, only one, the Popular Catholic Party, energetically opposed fascist tyranny, for which it often suffered the same persecution as the socialists. Its steadfastness (or, more accurately, the endurance of its leaders) but failed it for a while at the moment of the transfer of state power to the fascists; but more on that below.

All the other bourgeois parties, with the exception of the Popular Catholic Party, openly courted the fascists. The official authorities also courted them. The fascists gained especially much sympathy from the ranks of the bourgeois intelligentsia, which had once made pompous speeches in favor of the "great principles of democracy" and then zealously joined fascism. The fascist party achieved enormous success among the

so-called liberal professions. If we pay attention to the current composition of the central committee of the fascist party, we will see that 3/4 of it consists of scientists, professors, lawyers, doctors, etc.

Fascism has become for some a sure step to a brilliant career, and for others a refuge from hunger and unemployment. It has attracted many losers, embittered and thirsty for revenge, as well as many who have become disillusioned with the revolutionary movement or suffered from it. Fascism has opened an era of unprecedented apostasy in Italy. At the head of the fascist movement are yesterday's socialists of various shades. Mussolini's closest friend and, as was said, the most evil genius of the entire fascist party until recently was the former syndicalist Michele Bianchi. “Theoreticians of fascism" - Cerbolio, Grandi, Gravina and other former socialists. Massimo Rocca - although now expelled from the party for his opposition speeches - is a former anarchist. Thanks to fascism and the moral decay it brought into the country, no one in Italy is now surprised that people change their convictions much more often than their gloves. A student who leaves home in the morning a socialist, when he returns home, quietly announces to his family that he has signed up for the university group of fascists. The same thing happened with entire organizations, sometimes with workers' circles, syndicates, etc.

It is not necessary, however, to think that this disintegration spread throughout all elements of the extreme parties. For example, many in Italy remained staunch revolutionaries, and no violence could force them to change their convictions.

It must be admitted, however, that, in addition to all the political differences that divided the individual currents within the Socialist Party, as well as the Socialists from the Anarchists and Syndicalists, all the revolutionary parties of Italy were guilty of a major tactical error. It may be much easier for us to insist on this now, as a result of everything that has happened in Italy, but it must nevertheless be noted, especially now that in a number of European countries the reactionaries are beginning to organize themselves on the lines of the Fascist parties of Italy.

This tactical error of the revolutionary parties consisted in the fact that they underestimated! the importance of the military organization of the fascists. The first! fascist combat units, organized before their eyes, evoked nothing but ridicule on their part. It did not occur to them that with the open support of the government and the bourgeois parties, the fascist military organizations could eventually become a factor of decisive importance in the political destinies of Italy. For a long time it did not occur to them to organize resistance to these combat units in any form. Of course, the reformist wing of the Socialist Party is most to blame for this tactical error, basing all its hopes in the fight against fascism on the successes of the electoral struggle. This erroneous tactic led to the fact that, in parallel with the electoral successes of the socialists in the municipal and parliamentary elections, the strength of the fascist combat units grew, which gradually began to annul all the legal achievements of the socialist party. The erroneous tactics were not in the least facilitated by the belief in the democratic freedoms of Italy and in the full power of parliament, which had taken root not only among the reformists, but also among the more revolutionary-minded socialists. They saw all the atrocities of the fascists, saw that the government and the bourgeoisie did not refuse to play the role of accomplices of the fascists, but, having been brought up in an atmosphere of strictly legal struggle, they could not imagine that the fascists could, having crossed the line of legalism and mocked their vaunted democracy, carry out a coup d'etat in their favor. Meanwhile, subsequent events showed that the fascists understood the following unshakable truth better than these socialists: the political fate of a country is decided depending on the relationship of active social forces within it.

And some revolutionary elements, sensing the terrible danger that fascism brought with it, from the very first days tried to oppose the fascist combat units with their own military organizations. Of course, the people who sensed this need did not belong to the deputies of parliament or other high-ranking socialists. This idea was born in the working-class districts and among the poor peasants, who directly felt the fruits of fascist tactics. In many places, so-called detachments of "red arditi" ("arditi" in Italian

corresponds to our "shock worker") were formed. These red shock workers, unfortunately, were not particularly numerous. In addition, the police, who were in the service of fascism, fiercely persecuted them. While the fascist troops had government arsenals at their disposal, the red shock troops could only buy weapons with their own working pennies, at the same time exposing themselves to the risk of imprisonment for their possession. And yet, the working youth who were part of the red detachments more than once showed extraordinary courage in clashes with the more numerous and better armed detachments of fascist youth. One can only regret that, despite all the numerous obstacles that the cause of active resistance to the fascists encountered, the very idea of organizing red shock troops did not receive the proper dissemination among the Italian revolutionaries.

Meanwhile, the fascists, not content with successes in individual skirmishes or punitive expeditions, tried by all means to consolidate their influence in the country. There was not a single area of public and political life in Italy that they would leave without their intervention. By the beginning of 1922, it became clear that, despite the insignificant number of deputies they had in parliament compared to the socialists, the fascists were striving to become the governing party. It is curious that in 1922, our delegation, which arrived at the Genoa Conference, received a resolution sent to it by the Central Committee of the Fascists, which stated that the Fascists had decided, taking into account the full significance of the resumption of trade relations with Russia, not to hinder the activities of our delegation, provided that it would not interfere in the internal life of their country. And indeed, with the exception of one case that had no direct relation to the activities of our delegation, the Fascists kept their word and did not cause any unpleasantness to the delegation. This undoubtedly testified to the fact that at that time discipline in the ranks of the Fascist Party was so high that no unauthorized actions against the delegation could take place.

What role did the Italian government play at the time described? At its head stood Facta, a colorless personality, one of the least capable disciples of the old intriguer and

hardened parliamentary businessman Giolitti. Facta was proud of the fact that he did not belong to any party and was allegedly not an enemy of the working class. This little man tried to preserve his political career by always avoiding any responsible statements. This can be judged most easily by his behavior at the Genoa Conference, where he did not utter a single word that could in any way bind the Italian government. On the one hand, he managed not to anger the Entente, towards which he behaved rather slavishly, but he did not utter a single hostile word towards Soviet Russia. One can only wonder at the boundless stupidity (or cynicism) of those leaders of reformist socialism in Italy who, at the very height of the fascist movement, dreamed of entering into a bloc with the government of the colorless and insignificant Facta. It seemed clear even to a blind man that the "neutrality" of the cabinet in the struggle between the fascists and the working class in Italy was increasingly taking the form of covert aiding of the former. Before the eyes of this miserable government, enormous battles took place between the fascists and the defenseless population of the cities that had the misfortune of falling into their disgrace. The government was completely inactive, and in the worst cases, it provided assistance to the fascists if they themselves could not cope with their opponents.

This miserable government, headed by the puppet Facta, impassively watched as the fascists used every kind of violence to force the socialist mayors to resign. The fascists boasted that in the last year and a half they had managed, by means of beatings and all sorts of abuse, to force over 500 socialist mayors to resign, and if in some city or community the socialist council refused to resign, the fascists would break into the council premises by force, disperse the municipal councilors with revolvers and clubs, and put their own in their place. We do not know of a single case in which the Facta government would have applied any kind of repression to the fascists for this.

Of course, the pathetic chatterboxes from the camp of the reformists were only playing out a bad comedy, assuring that they could come to an agreement with the government of Facta for a common fight against... the fascists. However, this was not only pathetic chatter, but also a shameful betrayal.

In the spring of 1922, almost all of the fascists' activity was aimed at suppressing the strike movement in Italy. Reprisals against individual mayors, socialist or communist deputies, apparently, did not bring the fascists complete satisfaction. They also wanted to seize influence in the working class environment. For this purpose, they not only joined the fascist syndicates, but also staged a number of fascist strikes.

The end of July 1922 seemed to Mussolini a convenient time to undertake a final campaign against the working class of Italy. The oppression of fascism on the one hand, lockouts, unemployment and the ever-rising cost of living on the other, urged the working class to achieve at least some improvement in its intolerable situation by a sharp action. By that time, the idea of a united front was becoming popular among the workers. Under the name of the "Union of Labor", a temporary coalition of workers' parties was formed, which included socialists, communists, the General Confederation of Labor, and some anarchists and republicans. This coalition decided to first propose to the Facta government to put an end to the shameful impunity of the fascists and to influence them in the sense of ending the fascist terror. The government responded evasively. Then the Central Committee of the Union of Labor decided to declare a general strike in Italy. Mussolini, having learned of this decision, did not find it necessary to hide his joy. Not only the soul of a renegade, but also of an experienced provocateur awoke in him. He said: “Let them go on strike! That is exactly what we need. We will deal them the final blow. We are ready.”

The announcement of the strike served as the beginning of the civil war, which ended in the victory of fascism. Despite the destruction of a number of workers' organizations and the panic that was brought into the working environment by fascist terror, the best elements of the Italian revolutionaries still cherished the hope that they would be able to successfully bring the strike to an end. These hopes seemed close to being realized in the first days. Hatred of fascist oppression kindled enthusiasm in the courageous hearts of the overdose workers, whom fascist persecution could only temper in the struggle. There were days when it seemed that the strike movement would sweep

the entire country. For the first time in three and a half years of fascist rule, the revolutionaries could finally show the fascists that they were not the only masters in the country. As before, however, the reformist leaders and the masses trailing behind them turned out to be heavy ballast for the aforementioned bloc, sinking the ship.

Mussolini, meanwhile, was not asleep either. He decided to use this clash between the fascists and the working class at all costs in order to establish a fascist dictatorship in Italy, and he set about suppressing the strike with all the means at his disposal. First of all, the fascists, together with their closest allies, the nationalists, issued an appeal to civil servants and workers, calling on them to "throw off the yoke of politicians", in the words of the fascists, who were exploiting the masses for their own benefit. In the same appeal, they addressed the government, which they gave forty-eight hours to bring into obedience "those who are trying to destroy the very existence of the nation". They further declared that if the government did not do its duty, "the fascists would take the place of the state, whose impotence would be once again demonstrated." In his speech delivered in the city of Sartano, Mussolini repeated the same thing: "If the government does not put an end to the strike, the fascists will!"

The fascists tried to contact all elements of the working class, demoralized by their terror and ready to play the role of strikebreakers.

The most powerful resistance to the fascists was provided by the workers of Milan, despite the fact that this city was the residence of Mussolini himself, and therefore, of course, the fascists threw their best forces there.

When the government troops and police openly went over to the side of the fascists, the fascists managed to disperse the Milan municipal council, which consisted of socialists, and hoist the tricolor flag on the city council building. This was on August 3. On the 9th, the fascists took over the Genoese fort, where until then the red sailors' syndicates had always enjoyed undivided influence. It was not the heroism of the fascists, which these people, accustomed to always attacking in the majority and mainly against an unarmed enemy, could not have, that led to Mussolini's victory over the

strikers, but the poorly disguised complicity of the government. It was also this that ultimately brought him to power.

Meanwhile, within the revolutionary bloc of workers' parties, disagreements were growing. The reformists were dragging everyone into the quagmire of collaboration with the obviously treacherous Facta cabinet. The matter ended with the General Confederation of Labor, which was mainly under the influence of the reformists, leaving the workers' bloc and thus breaking the strike. Parliament was also terrorized by Mussolini's successes, having become convinced in practice that Mussolini had a much more real force behind him than the government.

Mussolini did not waste any time; instead of showing even the slightest gratitude to Facta, who had ensured his success in the fight against the Reds, Mussolini began openly to demand the dissolution of the Chamber, which, in his words, "had ceased to represent the public opinion of the country." Facta, meanwhile, had no reason to hope that new elections would ensure the success of the government; therefore, he categorically refused this demand. Then Mussolini came forward with a new demand. He demanded a change of cabinet. In the new cabinet, the fascists were to receive several portfolios. Negotiations in this direction began; they were conducted with Giolitti, Salandra, Orlando, but did not lead to any positive results.

Meanwhile, the hottest heads in the fascist ranks began to assure the more sober-minded Mussolini that the opportune time had come for the fascists to seize state power entirely. Mussolini wavered. The success of the fascist punitive expedition to Trentino, where they managed to carry out a number of measures against the will of the government, encouraged the fascist leaders so much that they began to talk openly about overthrowing the Facta cabinet by force. According to available information, this decision was finally made at a secret meeting of the fascist leaders, which took place in Milan on October 6, 1922, under the chairmanship of Mussolini himself. The fascists had long been obsessed with the idea of a "march on Rome." These words became the fascists' favorite slogan. It was not always taken literally. "The march on Rome" meant a

march of the fascist party against the weakened apparatus of state power, which had failed to maintain the national prestige of Italy at the proper level. This time it was decided to march on Rome in the literal sense of the word. Of course, the fascists, as a practical people, had first secured the cooperation of prominent commanders of the regular army. Thus, at a secret meeting on October 6, it was decided that Generals Farra and Ceccherini, the most popular in the Italian army, would take command of two columns of the fascist army, which would move on Rome by different routes. A small fact, however, depicting to what extent close cooperation had already been established by that time between the fascists and the regular army: thus, at the same meeting it was decided that both generals would set out on the campaign with all the insignia assigned to them, but attached not to the military uniform, but to the black shirts. All military dispositions were finally decided at a special secret conference on October 15, in which the most prominent representatives of the Italian generals took part.

On September 20, the national holiday, Mussolini gave a long speech in Udine, in which he declared that the fascist program could now be summed up in four words: "We want to govern the country." In the same speech, he declared that he would once and for all renounce any worship of the masses, which were nothing more than raw clay in the hands of the artist-sculptor; from this clay the sculptor could mold whatever he wanted.

After the speech in Udine, events moved at an accelerated pace. On October 20, Mussolini convened a congress in Naples and reviewed the fascist militia, of which there were about 40,000 people in the city. As was then established, the government provided enormous support to the Neapolitan congress, allowing all participants in the congress and review free travel by rail. At the Vesuvius Hotel in Naples, a historic meeting of the fascist leaders took place, deciding that the time had come to enter into negotiations with the cowardly Facta on the issue of handing over power to them within 48 hours. It was also decided that in the event of a negative response from the government, the fascist legions would be immediately moved on Rome. But the old conspirator Mussolini was not satisfied with this, and organized an emergency "five" that was to assume the

leadership of the revolutionary figures. He offered D'Annunzio to join this five, but the latter refused. On October 26, the leader of the right wing of the liberal party, former Prime Minister Salandra, on behalf of the fascist leaders, went to Facta to demand that he resign. The King, who was in the province at the time, hastily returned to Rome. On October 27, Mussolini arrived there, but the government refused his demand for the complete resignation of the cabinet. Another day later, Mussolini gave the order for a general mobilization of fascist troops. From all ends, the fascists began to advance - some by rail, some by trucks, and sometimes on foot. According to the fascist newspaper, Rome was besieged on three sides by 120,000 armed fascists, but the left-wing newspapers insisted that this was a lie and that at the time of the operetta-like “capture” of the capital, there were no more than 30-40,000 people at its gates. At the same time, the same newspapers added that all the fascists who took part in the march on Rome were, in addition to their revolvers, also armed with government-issue carbines.

On the other hand, the government continued to receive alarming news. On the night of October 27, Facta was finally struck by the idea of declaring a state of siege throughout the country, and in connection with this, he gave the appropriate order to the prefects of cities and towns. Historians of the fascist coup, who are trying to present it as a real revolution, assure that Facta did not doubt the king's solidarity with him, who, however, decided that the fascists were the only party that could further raise the prestige of the House of Savoy, and refused to sign the decree.

In order to maintain the appearance of resistance to the fascists, the government, after the king's refusal to proclaim a state of siege, took several measures that even journalists friendly to fascism called childish. Here and there, in front of Rome, barbed wire entanglements were erected. Mounted guards were posted at the entrance to some bridges, completely helpless against any group of five men. It was also decided to close the gates of Rome. But all this was, of course, a pitiful comedy, for at the same time the king, having received Salandra's refusal to organize a cabinet, sent a telegraphic

proposal about the same Mussolini and even sent two cars from the royal garage to fetch him from Civita Vecchia.

On October 30, Mussolini, in the uniform of a fascist general, with the proud expression of a formidable victor, appeared at the Quirinal, declared to the king that he was “returning great Italy into his hands” and, at the king’s invitation, formed a new cabinet within 6 hours. The fascist October was over.

VIII

Results of the Fascists' stay in power. - The murder of Matteotti

There is nothing the fascists like to talk about more than their revolution. In fact, there was no revolution. The more cowardly elements of the bourgeoisie voluntarily handed over their power into the hands of its more resolute and impudent elements. This is the meaning of Italian October.

The difference between the Russian and Italian October was especially eloquently revealed in the way the bourgeoisie of all European countries reacted to the coup. The Russian October evoked in the Entente nothing but blind hatred, which forced the governments of the Entente to organize intervention in Russian affairs and to provide every possible support to the Russian White Guard. The news of the fascist October filled the hearts of the Western European capitalists with deep joy. That is why the rulers of the Entente responded to Mussolini's telegram, informing them of the formation of a fascist government in Italy, in the most refined expressions. That is why the Federal Council of the most disgusting of all the “democratic” republics in the world, Switzerland, which at one time expelled Mussolini from the republic for “dangerous socialist propaganda,” hastened to send Mussolini a telegram of greetings informing him that the decree on his expulsion had been annulled and that the republican authorities would be pleased to receive the Italian prime minister on their territory as a dear, distinguished guest.

Italian fascism has become a “test field” for unlimited bourgeois dictatorship for

the entire world, just as Soviet Russia has become a guiding star for the working masses, where the proletariat, despite all the unheard-of suffering and hardship that has befallen it, has thrown off the yoke of the bourgeoisie.

Everything that has been done by the fascist government in the last 2 years only confirms the truth of what has been said. Every step, every measure of the fascist government is marked by devotion to the interests of the propertied classes and vengeful hatred of the workers. The fascists, who at first opposed any class struggle, in fact, put first the interests of only a part of the nation, namely, the privileged classes.

The fascist government found even the Italian nationalists, on whose behalf they initially spoke, to be reluctant fellow travelers.

As we have already noted above, Mussolini liquidated the Fiuman movement in the most peaceful way: he simply dispersed D'Annunzio's legions and concluded an agreement with Yugoslavia.

If we turn to Mussolini's first speeches, delivered in parliament, we will find in them, in addition to the open promise to bend any opposition into a ram's horn, his predictions that the fascist government would soon turn Italy into a promised land, but already 3-4 months later, in a speech delivered by Mussolini in the Senate, in connection with the ratification of the international Washington Convention and the Santa Margherita Agreement between Italy and Yugoslavia, Mussolini found sufficiently humble words to characterize his foreign program: Diplomacy of the whole world - including the Bolshevik one - maintains caution and restraint dictated by suspiciousness. I do not see any reason for Italian diplomacy to differ from others in this regard..."

The sensational clash with Greece in the summer of 1923, in which Mussolini's personal ardor played such a large role, was in fact only a proud gesture, which rather lowered than raised Italy's foreign prestige. Mussolini understood this. Since then, the diplomacy of the fascist government has not differed in any way from the foreign policy of previous governments. Italy has not risen - thanks to the hysterical cries of the fascist screamers - to the level of a first-rate power, having an equal voice in deciding

international issues with such members of the Entente as France or England. As before - as it was under the "traitorous governments" of Giolitti and Nitti - Italian diplomacy, for the most part, follows in the wake of England. Italy's latest attempt to strengthen its position in the Balkans, in connection with the December coup in Albania, as well as its undoubted participation in attempts to organize an anti-Soviet bloc in the Balkans, were, of course, dictated by the Foreign Minister of the reactionary English cabinet, Chamberlain, who, almost in his first week in power, hastened to visit Mussolini. The refusal of the Conservative cabinet of England to approve last year's Geneva Protocol on international guarantee treaties will undoubtedly "bring together" Italian diplomacy even more closely with English diplomacy, since Mussolini's relations with the League of Nations have not been improving since the Italo-Greek conflict. Mussolini even blurted out a suitable explanation for his modest position in foreign policy matters. In one of his interviews, he tried to justify his acquiescence in the area of foreign policy in the following way: "We must not forget that I am not only the leader of the party, but also the prime minister. As the leader of the fascists, I have a negative attitude towards these treaties and consider their ratification absurd. But, as the prime minister, I am forced to do this."

In the sphere of domestic policy, the most difficult question that confronted Mussolini was the question of relations with other parties. As for the communists, maximalists and socialists, Mussolini declared a merciless war on them. Their press was liquidated. All sorts of repressions of a legal and semi-legal character rained down on the members of the revolutionary organizations. The government arrested them and rotted them in prisons, broke up their meetings, and the fascist free spirits completed the work of the government with arbitrary repressions and the forced infusion of castor oil and all the other measures by which they earned the glory of the Italian oprichniks.

As for the reformists, the most cynical elements of them, like d'Aragona, at the very first moment of the fascist victory tried to run up to the new premier from the back door and offer him their cooperation - but Mussolini categorically rejected any

agreements with the reformists. He allowed these miserable traitors to help fascism with their cowardly behavior in lulling the working masses, without receiving anything in return.

Mussolini directed all his efforts from the very beginning to reaching an agreement with some bourgeois parties. But he cannot boast of any particular successes in this area. The Italian bourgeoisie takes into account perfectly well that Mussolini is a loyal and reliable defender of its class interests and that, having carried out the "October Revolution" in Italy, he only carried out the will of those who sent him, but the bourgeois parties do not want yesterday's hired servant to become their master. They welcomed the fascist revolution because it brought disintegration into the working class and delayed new attempts at social revolution for a certain period of time. But many of them do not believe that in our time the dictatorship of the propertied classes can become a lasting phenomenon. This explains why Mussolini has so far succeeded in dissolving into the ranks of fascism only the Nationalist Party, which was very close to them in spirit. His efforts to attract the Catholic People's Party ("Popolari") and the Italian Liberals to responsible cooperation have been a complete failure. The first cabinet did not even include two members of the Polari Party and one or two Liberals. But gradually they all left the ranks of the government. Thus, at the present time, Mussolini's cabinet is entirely fascist. The right wing of the Italian Liberals, led by former Prime Minister Salandra, supported the fascists for the longest time, but at the end of last year the Salandrists also left the ranks of the government.

The most promising points of the fascist program were the announced financial and economic reforms. From the first day of his rule, Mussolini and his ministers outlined the following radical measures to raise the Italian lira and regulate the state budget: extreme savings in government services by eliminating a significant number of government employees and workers, tax reforms, the transfer of unprofitable government enterprises (railways, post, telegraph and telephone) into private hands, the attraction of foreign capital, etc.

As regards the first point of the financial program, the fascists did, indeed, do something for the simple reason that any reduction can be carried out with a simple stroke of the pen, but in Italy this reduction affected mainly the workers and employees of small caliber. The big officials are thriving under the shadow of fascism. As regards the much-publicized reduction of railway employees, this measure was nothing other than an undisguised reprisal against all politically unreliable railway workers. In the area of "reductions" one more measure should be noted, which had a painful effect not so much on the urban workers as on the agricultural workers. Previous governments had fought unemployment in the countryside by organizing so-called public works at the expense of the treasury, but the fascists, as ideologists of strikebreaking, could not reconcile themselves to this. They always accused governments that organized public works of following the lead of the socialists, who always insisted on expanding these works. Having achieved power, they began to economize on government spending precisely by cutting back on public works.

Tax reform had long been part of the fascists' plans. As mercenaries of the bourgeoisie, they had always been concerned that the bourgeoisie was paying too many taxes and that the working class was evading them. From the first day of their rule, the fascists declared that they would achieve "equalization" in this matter. Talk of proportional taxation, progressive income tax, etc., was all "empty and unnecessary socialist nonsense"; and the fascists hastened to abolish any principle of proportionality in taxation and introduced a tax on the wages of workers and employees. This is the only real "benefit" that the working masses of Italy have received from fascism.

The question of transferring the railways, post and telegraph into private hands, of course, testifies to Mussolini's extreme devotion to the interests of private capital, but nevertheless all attempts made in this direction remain unsuccessful. It is almost impossible to attract foreign capital to Italy. In our days, foreign capital has become quite cowardly. Western European capitalists, who eagerly welcomed Mussolini's experiment, which, in their opinion, was supposed to knock the arrogance out of the

presumptuous working class, still cannot consider this country, in which the discontent of the broad working masses with the despotic policy of the government is seething, as a convenient place to invest their capital. "If Mussolini stays in power for a few years," they reason, "and if he succeeds in raising the country's economic power with his draconian measures, then Italy will probably be such a place." Until then, they prefer to take a wait-and-see attitude.

Even the meager savings that Mussolini achieved at first could not ease the situation of the state treasury, because there remained an area that was not touched by considerations of economy. We mean the military department.

True, Mussolini made some reductions in the Italian armed forces, but at the expense of these reductions he made large expenditures in other branches of the military department. When Mussolini became prime minister, he first of all turned his attention to the so-called Royal Guard, which performed police functions and was established during the Nitti ministry, which he had reason to distrust. Mussolini had to show a lot of courage in the matter of liquidating the Royal Guard. It represented such a free spirit in Italy that it was not very inclined to obey the order to abolish it. Mussolini issued a decree to reduce the number of this guard to a minimum and to forcibly merge it with the carabinieri (regular police). The Royal Guard responded to this by breaking out in a number of riots in individual barracks, etc. However, Mussolini dealt with them as unceremoniously as with his former friends, the Fiuman legionnaires. Furthermore, Mussolini carried out a whole series of reforms in his fascist militia. These reforms were aimed at merging the composition of this fascist militia into the ranks of the active army and thereby ensuring his proteges a predominant role in it. The military organization of the fascists was significantly increased during this time. Now it has become obligatory for every fascist to be a member of the militia. Since the fascist party openly exists at the expense of government funds, it is clear that all the penny savings achieved by him in other areas are now being spent on strengthening the military power of the fascists. Having ensured that fascism had a dominant influence in the regular army, Mussolini

took a number of measures to increase the latter's combat effectiveness. The term of service in Italy was now increased to 18 months, which immediately increased the size of the army. Mussolini also significantly increased the Italian artillery and especially the air corps.

Even after the bright anti-proletarian essence of fascism had fully revealed itself, many economists continued to assert that fascism was leading to an increase in the national welfare of Italy. However, in recent times, such an assessment of the results of fascism's economic policy has become increasingly skeptical. The last half-year in the life of Italy has been marked by a sharp increase in the cost of living, on the one hand, and an extremely alarming decline in the exchange rate of the Italian lira, which has sunk to 18-20% of its pre-war value, on the other.

There are a number of other very indicative signs in this regard. Thus, the revival in the field of heavy industry, observed in the first quarter of 1924, when more than 400 private joint-stock companies with a capital of 300 million lire emerged, is balanced by such a phenomenon as a decrease in the total amount of private capital invested in joint-stock companies, despite all the privileges granted to private capital by the fascist government. Thus, in 1920, the total amount of private share capital in Italy was 4,834,000,000 lire. in 1923—2,088,000,000 lire. An alarming sign, depicting the painful state of the entire commercial and industrial apparatus of present-day Italy, is the steady increase in bankruptcies. It must be borne in mind that the figures of registered bankruptcies given below are significantly lower than the actual ones, since in Italy the custom of "amicable settlement" of all such catastrophes is very widespread (example: the largest "Discount Bank", which settled its affairs with its creditors by paying 40%).

	Number of bankruptcies	Average per month
1920	641	53
1921	1782	148
1922	4662	305
1923	5662	473
1924 first 3 months . . .	1861	620

Despite the unusual growth of emigration (in addition to the search for work, under the fascist government, the motive for emigration, which is not registered anywhere, is also political persecution), unemployment has continued to increase again in recent times. The recruitment of the fascist militia and the generally large absorption of unemployed lumpen proletarians by the growing fascist party somewhat reduced the number of unemployed by the beginning of 1923. Meanwhile, from the last quarter of 1923, unemployment increased again.

September 1923	.....	180,634 unpaid.
November "	.....	199.694 "
December „	.....	225.093 "
January 1924	.....	280,765 "

The serious deterioration in the situation of the Italian worker is caused by two parallel factors: the decline in the average wage level under the fascist government and the rise in the cost of living, which, as we shall see below, reached catastrophic proportions in the second half of 1924. The average wage of an Italian worker is 15-20 lire (30% lower than before the war, if we take into account the fall in the lire exchange rate). Translated into Italian lire, the average earnings of a French worker are 44 lire, an English worker 75 lire and an American worker 100 lire.

In addition to natural causes (crop failure in Italy and poor harvests in grain-exporting countries), the smashing of workers' cooperatives and the fascist government's refusal to standardize prices for essential products led to an extraordinary growth of private speculation in these products. The increase in bread prices was the main pretext for raising prices for all other mass-consumption products. In just one and a half months (from September 15 to November 1, 1924), we have the following picture of price growth (for Milan):

Bread (per kilo)—from 1.80 lira to 2.10 lira
Butter (per 100 g)—from 2 lira to 2.30 lira

Cheese (cheap, variety)—from 1 lira to 1.20 lira
Olive oil (per kilo)—from 9 lira to 10.80 lira
Beans (per kilo)—from 1.60 lira to 3.00 lira etc.

These figures paint a much more vivid and accurate picture of the situation of the working masses of modern Italy than the officially embellished data in the reports of the Ministry of Finance on the “brilliant state” of the state finances of Italy.

Only on the basis of the complete failure of the financial and economic program of fascism, in particular, manifested in the fact that during all the years of fascist rule the accumulation of savings did not increase in the least in the country, and the extreme discrepancy between the incessant rise in the cost of living, on the one hand, and the decrease in wages, on the other, could the political crisis, caused mainly by the murder of Matteotti, take on such proportions that many are talking about the irreversible decline of Italian fascism.

As a cautious politician, Mussolini understood from the very beginning that he would not be able to govern the country without resorting to parliamentary methods. Then he conceived the idea of reducing parliament to such a humiliating state that it would not be able to pose a serious obstacle to the fascist dictatorship, while at the same time ensuring a certain external "decency" for foreign countries. The electoral reform carried out by Mussolini immediately doomed the Italian parliament to the fact that a fascist majority in it would become inevitable. This reform was based on the so-called majoritarian system, which, while ensuring a majority for the ruling party, completely places at its disposal the parties that received a minority. The April elections of 1924 fully justified Mussolini's plans. The unrestrained terror carried out by the fascists in the localities led to the fact that parliament was forced to turn into a miserable rattle in their hands; and, nevertheless, parliament did not allow fascism to sleep peacefully, as a tribune from which accusatory speeches against the ruling party were heard.

One of the most courageous exposers of Italian fascism was the socialist Matteotti, despite the fact that in his views he adhered to moderate socialism and

remained secretary of the unitary (united) socialist party of Italy until his death. By this time, stratification had begun within fascism itself. While the provincial tsars of fascism and members of semi-legal bandit organizations insisted that fascism must go to the victorious end, absolutely disregarding any norms of legal order, individual voices of more prudent fascists were heard in favor of softening the domestic policy of fascism. Mussolini, who for a long time pretended that his sympathies belonged to the moderate wing of fascism and repeatedly announced a return to the norms of constitutional law (the notorious "normalization"!), in fact, patronized the extreme wing of provincial fascism. Possible new revelations on the part of Matteotti, about which the newspapers spoke at length, decided his fate. On June 10, 1924, Matteotti was kidnapped in broad daylight by a gang of fascists, and a few weeks later his body was found in the forest thickets, in the outskirts of Rome. This unheard-of crime, the news of which flew around the world, completely exposed all the behind-the-scenes filth and criminality that reigned in the fascist ranks. At one time, Mussolini himself seemed to waver, announcing in parliament in an agitated tone that only his sworn enemies could have committed the murder, and promising an impartial investigation of the matter. But the parliamentary opposition, which had shown complete distrust of these statements, turned out to be right. Every step of the investigation provided new evidence that the threads from the murderers led to the offices of the highest dignitaries of fascism. And quite recently, one of those charged in the Matteotti murder case published memoirs in which he loudly declared that Mussolini himself was informed of the planned murder of Matteotti...

It should be noted that the opposition reacted to Matteotti's murder in different ways. All the democratic-bourgeois parties, including the Socialist Compromisers, decided to respond to Matteotti's murder by boycotting parliament until the country returned to constitutional guarantees. These parties broke the strike announced at the suggestion of the Communist Party. And to this day, this split continues to divide the anti-fascist opposition in Italy into two sharply distinct camps. While the workers' wing

of the opposition is convinced that the Italian proletariat must settle its accounts with the bloody fascist regime outside the walls of parliament, the bourgeois-compromising part of the opposition intends to settle these accounts within the walls of parliament, at the first convenient opportunity moving from boycotting the chamber to organic work within its walls.

Of course, this profound difference does not lie in the different assessments of Matteotti's murder, but in the fundamental disagreement caused by the impassable gulf between the aspirations of the Italian working class and the dreams of the Italian bourgeoisie. For the former, the final link in the struggle against fascism is the social revolution in Italy; as for the bourgeois parties, as the leader of the bourgeois opposition, Amendola, recently stated quite frankly, they are much more terrified of the specter of a socialist revolution than of fascism.

In any case, the political consequences of Matteotti's murder were quite serious for fascism. They led to the complete isolation of fascism from all bourgeois parties. Following Matteotti's murder, all national-patriotic organizations, such as "unions of former war veterans", "invalids", etc., which had hundreds of thousands of members in Italy and enjoyed enormous prestige in the country, broke away from Mussolini. The most serious blow to fascism should be considered the departure of "former war veterans". We must not forget that at one time they were used by Mussolini as a platform for winning popularity in broad patriotic circles in Italy. Mussolini made every effort to split this organization and prevent its break with fascism. However, these attempts ended in failure. At present, the Fascist Party and these national-patriotic organizations represent hostile camps. It is possible, of course, that at the cost of small mutual concessions they will be able to unite again, but this will depend on the immediate political situation in Italy. Meanwhile, the process of stratification continues in the ranks of the Fascist Party. At the moment when we are writing this chapter, success seems to be on the side of the extreme elements, who have forced Mussolini to take a firm course towards the opposition. Farinacci, the leader of the extreme Fascists, has been elected

General Secretary of the Party, having taken upon himself the official defense of Matteotti's main murderers. After his election, this gentleman had the audacity to make a speech in which he declared that at the present moment all the hopes of the opposition were placed on the Matteotti trial, but that these hopes were not destined to be justified. The Matteotti trial, according to Farinacci, would only lead to the exaltation of the prestige of the fascist party and to the greater disgrace of the opposition (!).

The near future will show whether Farinacci correctly took into account the situation in modern Italy, enslaved by fascist gangs.

PART TWO

I

"Fascism is a youth movement"

The leaders and theoreticians of Italian fascism like to assert: “Fascism is a movement of physical strength and youth.” Pietro Gorgolini in his book “The Fascism of Italian Life,” which Mr. Mussolini “himself” recognized as the most precious pearl of fascist literature, declares that “fascist youth is the heart, the spinal cord, the most vital juices of the entire movement.” The author attributes a good half of the popularity of the movement’s leader, Mussolini, to the fact that Mussolini has retained youthful vigor[2] and courage to this day.

In addition, Mussolini is known for his passion for fencing, aviation and various other sports.

Comparing Mussolini and the aged Giolitti as two candidates for the post of prime minister, Gorgolini declared that, apart from certain political considerations, preference should be given to the "young" prime minister, Mussolini, who would fly into the ward in an airplane piloted by himself, over the old Giolitti, who... would have to be carried there on a stretcher!

The official anthem of the fascists, which they sing when setting out for their

2 Mussolini is currently 42 years old.

celebrations or punitive expeditions, is a song of youth, beginning with highly poetic words:

“Youth, youth,
Spring of beauty!”

General Luigi Cadorna, one of the three "first saints" of the fascist movement (the other two are considered to be the leader of the party Mussolini and the famous poet G. d'Annunzio), on the day after the fascists managed to seize state power, declared in a newspaper interview that he did not doubt for a moment that the glorious Italian youth who fought for a great Italy would not tolerate further mockery of national ideals. Thus, the brave general regards the victory of fascism in October 1922 exclusively as a victory of the fascist youth. Mussolini expressed the same idea in his telegram to another “saint of fascism,” Gabriele d’Annunzio, in which the new Prime Minister of Italy expressed his firm hope that his comrade in fascism, d’Annunzio, would come to personally congratulate the “valiant youth” on their victory.

In the most unbridled and prone to incredibly florid phraseology organ of the Italian fascists, "Empire", we recently read in an article devoted to the ideology of Italian fascism the following lines:

"Our goal is an empire of genius, art, strength, inequality, beauty, intelligence, elegance, originality, an empire colored with the colors of fantasy. This empire will be anti-socialist, anti-clerical and anti-traditional. It will have room for all freedoms and all progress, but within the framework of absolute patriotism. It will be governed by the best of Italians, without a parliament, with the help of a technical council composed exclusively of youth."

Leaving aside the analysis of the fascist program already made above, we draw attention to the last sentence, which breathes with obvious hatred for the "old men" - in the opinion of fascist theorists, who have finally undermined their authority in the eyes

of the masses by ineptly governing the country. From these words we can conclude that in the eyes of the fascists, all youth as a whole is a symbol of anti-communist reaction. Such confidence could arise in their minds, naturally, only after the appropriate processing of those youth cadres who, due to a number of socio-political conditions of the post-war period, joined fascism.

II

"Youth Unions" among the fascists

By the time the statutes of the fascist party were drawn up, the participation of youth in the fascist movement, although already of great importance, was not formalized in the form of the existence of separate, independent youth organizations. Fascist youth were part of the general links at the local level. But the leaders of the party and, first and foremost, Mussolini, had already drawn attention to the fact that youth needed to be organized into special youth sections.

In the charter of the national fascist party we find the following scheme of the charter of youth fascist organizations:

(We present it in full, since at present this scheme has become mandatory for all existing youth organizations of fascists.)

Art. 1. In order to involve young forces spiritually drawn into the orbit of its actions and its propaganda, the national fascist party takes measures to establish a vanguard of fascist youth. The sections of the vanguard of fascist youth set themselves the task of supporting the work of the links and directing the youth to the study of questions closely related to the life and development of the nation.

Art. 2. Each group must take care, in the nearest future, to organize, within the territory over which it has influence, a vanguard of fascist youth, which will constitute the first link of communication for all fascists who have reached the age of 15 and have not passed the age of 18.

Art. 3. The groups that are unable to immediately begin organizing this first link,

due to the absence of elements of the given age, must immediately develop energetic propaganda aimed at attracting such elements to themselves, and then begin organizing a youth section from among the registered members.

Art. 4. As a result of the above, the board of the national fascist party hereby decrees that all sections of the so-called student vanguard existing in various cities must immediately re-form into a vanguard of fascist youth.

Art. 5. The sections of the vanguard of the fascist youth must be organized and function on the same basis on which the constitution and activity of the local links are based. The same statute scheme will be valid for the youth sections, of course, if it is correspondingly reworked, taking into account that they include only young men from 15 to 18 years of age.

Art. 6. As an exception and with the approval in each individual case by the board of local ties, those fascists who have already passed the age of 18, but can contribute to the youth organization their share of experience, ability, seriousness and set a good example for younger comrades, may also enter the vanguard of the fascist youth.

Art. 7. The board of the youth vanguard is subordinate to the board of the local union. The secretary of the youth vanguard takes part in meetings of the board of the local union in each individual case when issues that may be of interest to the youth organization are being discussed.

Art. 8. The vanguard of the fascist youth is maintained by the dues of the members registered in it, as well as by the funds that may be provided to it by the local union in the form of subsidies. The administrative management of the vanguard is in the hands of a special secretary, appointed by the board of the vanguard, but under the control of the board of the local union.

Art. 9. The organization of the youth avant-garde on a national scale and its activities are regulated by the following bodies:

a) Central Committee. The Central Committee is elected by the national congress of avant-gardes and usually meets every six months. It includes one representative from

those regions in each of which there are at least ten regularly constructed and working avant-gardes.

b) The Executive Council. It consists of seven members elected from among the members of the vanguard of the city where the national fascist party has its headquarters. The members of the executive council are entitled by right to be members of the central committee of the vanguards. The council meets at least once every two weeks.

c) Secretariat. The office of the secretariat of the youth consists of a general secretary, one administrative employee, and sometimes a vice-secretary. They are appointed by the instructions of the central committee of the vanguard; their official appointments come from the board of the national fascist party. The office of the secretariat is located under the general secretary of the party and works under his direct control.

Art. 10. The Central Committee represents the governing body of the avant-gardes, being a direct expression of the will of the avant-gardists, who, by electing it, grant it the power to implement the tasks and directives contained in the resolutions of the youth congresses and included in the general plan of activity of the national fascist party.

Art. 11. The Executive Council, with the assistance of the Secretariat, carries out the work of the national organization of sections and coordinates their joint activities, as well as all orders of higher authorities aimed at promoting the planned development of the movement.

Art. 12. The General Secretary of the Vanguards takes part in meetings of the Central Committee of the Party with the right to vote on issues of direct interest to youth organizations.

Art. 13. Certain badges are established, which all members of the avant-garde must acquire. Special embroidery is also established for the avant-garde.

Badges and embroideries are issued by the Avant-garde office to youth sections

that request them for an appropriate fee (prices are indicated below).

The above scheme of the youth charter was adopted by the central committee temporarily. It was decided to leave it in force until the convocation of the congress of the vanguard of fascist youth, which was to take place at the end of 1922. The congress of youth already took place after the seizure of state power by the fascists, and the above scheme is now considered approved.

The charter of the youth organizations of the fascists testifies to the fact that the entire organization of the party is built on discipline with a stick. As can be seen from this charter, the youth is not given any freedom or any special initiative. They must blindly obey the directives of adult fascists, and their initiative, as well as all their youthful ardor, are used only during punitive expeditions, where they are given complete freedom to commit violence and misbehave in honor of the "great covenants" of fascism.

III

The Cruelty of the Fascist Youth

The landowners and manufacturers of Italy greeted with delight the birth of the fascist movement, which was to bring them deliverance from the "red tyranny". First of all, they hastened to come to the aid of Mr. Mussolini and his gangs by all means available to them. The leagues of agrarians everywhere turned into hospitable refuges for fascist gangs. The urban bourgeoisie subsidized the fascists with money. But, of course, the most important aid to fascism was provided by the urban and agrarian bourgeoisie by placing manpower at its disposal, and - first of all - their sons.

We have already noted that fascism loves to present itself everywhere as a movement of youth and strength. This assertion certainly has its basis. If you pay attention to the illustrations that often appear in magazines for the purpose of perpetuating fascist exploits, you will see that the participants in fascist processions and punitive expeditions consist mainly of young people. Both in the revolutionary cadres

and in the camp of the slave-owners of our time, the fascists, the youth occupies the most militant posts, and if in the revolutionary ranks the youth fights courageously and sacrifices their lives in the name of the emancipation of the working masses, then the fascist youth acting in their ranks - with its characteristic straightforwardness - surrounded by the shameless rogues of Italian nationalism and the corrupt servants of capital, is distinguished by extraordinary cruelty in the persecution of their class enemies.

The sons of landowners became famous for their particular cruelty in persecuting the working masses, always leading the suppression of agricultural workers' strikes under the banner of fascism. These young people, who for the most part spend the winter in the city, where they study in secondary or higher educational institutions, return to their native estates in the spring for the holidays, and here they become active members of agrarian leagues, leading the suppression of "rebellious" peasants.

Let us see how the fascist youth “lived and worked” at the dawn of the fascist movement, when it was still difficult to talk about it as an organized party. Fascism then began to use in the struggle for the first time a unique “method of direct action,” which was expressed in the fact that they willingly threw all their forces into organizing punitive expeditions against rebellious peasants or farm laborers, as well as recruiting strikebreakers to fight strikes.

In order to avoid the accusation of using biased authors from the Communist or Socialist camps, we prefer in this case to resort to the testimony of a man who, on the contrary, can only be accused of bias towards fascism. We have in mind the old, definitely reactionary, right-wing liberal Mario Missiroli, the author of the book "Fascism and the Italian Crisis", who gives in it very eloquent descriptions of the activities of the first fascists in suppressing the notorious agrarian uprising in the Ferrara district.

If we listen to Missiroli, after the split that occurred in the ranks of the Socialist Party, the masses, disillusioned with the socialist program, began to look for new ways

of struggle. This is where fascism first arose. Thus, Missiroli considers fascism as the result of the search for a new worldview, which people who were disillusioned with socialism began after the events of 1919-1920. According to him, this tireless search for a new worldview and new ways of struggle was especially painful for Italian youth. He reproaches adults for abandoning the youth at such a critical period. War and revolution brought confusion to young hearts, but the youth had no one to talk to, no one to consult with.

"Meanwhile," Missiroli reasons, "life did not stand still. The literary and generally spiritual baggage of our youth was too insufficient for them to be able to cope with the misfortune with its help... It was enough to listen to their conversations in coffee houses to feel that fermentation was taking place in their brains, some new ideas were being born... And, meanwhile, all the living and healthy force of our nation was contained in this youth. Disillusioned with socialism, feeling abandoned by the bourgeoisie and misunderstood by official culture, these young men hastened to delve into themselves." In the author's opinion, the collectivist worldview was thus replaced by the strengthening of individualism.

“But none of us can live for long in the circle of narrowly egoistic experiences,” declares M. Misiroli, “and therefore all these young men, many of whom were impatiently awaiting the revolution, but did not wait for it, abruptly turned back to the old traditions and put the matter of exalting the nation first of all.”

However, when he moves on to trying to define fascism, Missiroli finds himself in an extremely difficult position. He cannot find a suitable definition of this movement. He only asserts that it is equally wrong to classify this movement as a purely idealistic and romantic phenomenon, or to consider fascism as a “white guard, at the mercy of large-scale industry and the banks.” Finding its true essence is much more difficult, because fascism develops too quickly and changes color too often.

Nevertheless, Missiroli, a few pages later, having given a description of the glorious exploits of the fascist youth during the suppression of the peasant uprising in

the Ferrara district, accompanies it with the following, very unambiguous, comments. Wishing to find at least some excuse for the bourgeois youth who set dogs on the rebellious peasants and farm laborers, plundered their homes, beat them half to death, and sometimes to death, with their clubs, introduced serfdom in places and forced entry into fascist cells, Missiroli resorts to a comparison of the atrocities committed by both sides, i.e., the striking farm laborers, defending their legal rights, and the landowners who attacked them.

"If socialist-minded peasants," he says, "sometimes resorted to crimes in the struggle, our civil conscience found consolation in the fact that the masses, under the influence of education, will be able, albeit slowly, but nevertheless inevitably, in the course of time, to rise above the present low moral level, which stems from cruel instincts and egoism."

"But we find no excuse, no consolation, when we think of violence, premeditated and always resorting to the weapon, practiced by the heartless bourgeoisie, with which its boundless superiority in the sense of education, upbringing, morals, security of life, etc., did not interfere not only to kill, but — what is even worse — to subject people to torture and mockery. Bitter pessimism takes hold of our souls at the thought that the two-thousand-year era of Christianity has hardly changed the psychology of man in his attitude toward other people by an iota. Unbearable anxiety and uneasiness take hold of us at the sight of the bleak reality, testifying to the fact that personal gain or class interests can push a person to fratricide. If the actions of the members of the (peasant) league should arouse condemnation, then one can only think of a punitive expedition led by young students or lyceum students, young men studying in our schools and universities, who undoubtedly read Carducci and excitedly recited the Divine Comedy, with extreme despair in their souls. I have often thought of many of my fascist friends lately, and have recalled how they, sitting with me on the same university bench, would read Carlyle or Werner's sentimental novel together with me - and could never hide the deep emotion that overwhelmed them... I have also recalled - not without a smile - how

they reacted to reading Leopardi and the Myths, and I cannot understand how they decided to embark on the path of bloody revenge and torture. How can they enter into the struggle against workers who can only recite Dante's verses, learned by heart, by the book and not without difficulty? Or—to put oneself on the same level with a farm laborer or some chairman of a peasant league, having a diploma in one’s pocket, and in the recent past—the greatest happiness of studying Pascal and Carducci, Ricci and Oriani.—I could never understand how it happens that superiority in a cultural sense cannot dictate to a person the renunciation of earthly material goods; how the consciousness of a person standing at the very top of the social ladder does not force him to refrain from a military fight with those who stand on its lowest rung.”

Mario Missiroli is too experienced and old a journalist for us to believe the sincerity of his bewilderment. He understands perfectly well what class struggle is, and why knowing the Divine Comedy by heart does not in the least prevent a landowner from coming out in defense of private property and flogged to death the farm laborer who would incline his comrades to organize a strike at this landowner's or even to participate in it. One of the outstanding fascist figures, Baraichini, in his speech delivered in the Chamber, i.e., before the world, openly boasted in 1923 that he had personally flogged "rebellious workers." And did any of the deputies of the liberal faction, i.e., party supporters of Missiroli, spoke with a word of condemnation addressed to this scoundrel or, at least, stopped shaking his hand? Missiroli knows very well that it is precisely in this contradiction between ostentatious culture and the slave-owning instincts of the educated landowners and manufacturers that, like a drop of water, all the boundless baseness and inhumanity of the modern capitalist system is reflected. Therefore, all these lyrical outpourings of the old liberal chatterbox and friend of many gentlemen Baranchiki, who personally flogged workers, are not worth a penny... It is possible that it was Baranchiki and he together shed tears over Dante and Werther, but not a single tear... of anger or indignation did Missiroli shed over the slavery of the working masses of Italy, into which the fascists turned them.

IV

Fascist school.

Thus, the militant vanguard of fascism, which is nothing more than a white guard, paid off by landowners, large-scale industry and banks, is the bourgeois youth. Of course, class interests are the main factor that pushes this youth into the ranks of the fascist party. But in order for it to be able to display such exceptional cruelty in the struggle, which makes even many ideologists of the bourgeois system think twice, it is necessary that this youth be first corrupted not only by the constant influence of its social environment, but also by the specific upbringing and education it receives.

Besides Missiroli, we find evidence of these exploits of the fascist youth not only in "neutral" authors, but also in many outspoken friends of fascism. Thus, in March 1923, one of the Parisian journals (“Correspondent”, 15) published an article praising Italian fascism, under the title "Fascist Revolution in Italy". The author of this article, among other things, says:

"It would be ridiculous to try, as some have already done, to present the fascist youth as holy cherubs. They very often allowed themselves to do things that deserved very little praise."

And, further, the author lists all the methods of struggle used by the fascists - and first of all by the fascist youth - against the working masses: here are beatings, individual, collective, smashing of private homes, burning of farms, circles, leagues, expulsion of legally elected deputies from local municipalities, expulsions, arbitrary arrests, torture by pouring huge quantities of castor oil down the throat, etc. Another defender of fascism, Professor Miceli, in his book "The Fascist Party and Its Function in Italy" (Milan, 1924), listing all the dangers threatening fascism, says that the lack of discipline and individualistic aspirations are major shortcomings of the Italian character. These dangerous traits made themselves known in the ranks of the fascist party. It is not without reason that opponents of fascism see its decomposition in a whole series of

violence carried out by the fascists in clear violation of the party charter and discipline

“But,” says Miceli, “if we wanted to objectively understand these facts, then we would need to think about the fact that we are dealing with a party that is not only young, but also consists for the most part of youth, that is, of elements bursting with their boundless energy and having been tempered over the past few years—first in the struggle with an external enemy, and then with an internal one.”

In his further reasoning, Miceli says that this feature of the fascist party leaves its mark on all its activities.

What the fascist professor Miceli says is repeated by all his colleagues. It is clear that such explanations leave a peculiar imprint on the entire fascist educational program and the way of educating youth. From the very beginning, impunity is the basis of education; violence against the "internal enemy", very often dictated by selfish goals or the perverted aspirations of bourgeois youth, is elevated to the level of a patriotic feat. In order to completely pollute the brains of fascist youth, religion was called upon to help.

The first thing the fascist Minister of Public Education, Professor Gentile, did - by the way, his activities have never ceased to be praised by our White Guards in their Berlin newspaper "Rul" - was, in his words, "to return the king and God to the school." This statement contains the whole essence of fascist education.

Thus, in its charter, the Fascist Party insists on the creation of an “exclusively national type of elementary school that could prepare—physically and morally—future Italian soldiers, for which purpose strict control by the state over school programs, the selection of teachers, their works is required, especially in those communes where anti-national parties dominate.”

And further:

"Pedagogical schools must be built on the same principles as the schools for which they prepare future teachers. In view of this, it is necessary to achieve a strictly national character for those institutions from which teachers emerge even for lower schools."

It is curious that in organizing industrial and agricultural educational institutions, the fascist program sets as its goal the creation of a “technical class, an intermediate level between the performers (i.e., workers) and production directors.”

The secondary school, according to the opinion of fascist theorists, should have a strictly classical character. It is necessary to introduce the teaching of Latin - "so that French is no longer the only auxiliary language."

Of course, no one is so affected by all the pompous parades, signs, garments, all the noise of high-flown phrases and appeals to the classical glory of ancestors, which are put into play by the fascists, as the youth, prepared for this by the appropriate patriotic education.

There is no doubt about one thing - namely, that classical education, in any case, gave the fascist youth the opportunity to assimilate one of the brilliant traditions of classical Rome: inhuman cruelty and boundless contempt for the poor classes.

V

Universities are the stronghold of fascism.

From the moment of the birth of fascism, the Italian universities began to turn into a stronghold of reaction. The youth, who in Italy had previously been the bearers of revolutionary ideas (they had always been with Garibaldi and Mazzini against the oppressors of Italy and fought in the vanguard for its liberation, and during the period of growth of the workers' movement in Italy they always filled the ranks of the socialist parties and revolutionary syndicates), under the influence of the shift produced by the imperialist war, as well as immediate class interests, in large numbers turned to the right and stood under the reactionary banner of fascism. The universities became a hospitable refuge for all the dark forces that inspire reaction.

It does not follow from this, however, that the pernicious influence of fascism did not touch the working youth. In addition to the terrible scourge of unemployment, which is always capable of pushing the less conscious elements of the proletariat into the arms

of reaction, the corrupting influence of the imperialist war undoubtedly had an effect here. War develops a cult of physical strength at the expense of the spiritual development of man, devalues the life of the enemy in his eyes, cultivates cunning, perfidy and treachery. The army in a capitalist state brings moral decay into the souls of its participants by the institution of distinctions, orders, ranks and other types of rivalry for power over people and influence. Many young people returned from the war with devastated souls. After 2-3 years of sitting in the trenches, many of them had become unaccustomed to peaceful work and studies. They liked the profession of officers - it was hard to part with shoulder straps and distinctions. Meanwhile, the fascist police hospitably opened the doors to their ranks for them. A young man, a former clerk or teacher, or even a worker, returning from the war with the rank of lieutenant, could very quickly rise to the rank of general in the ranks of the fascist army. From the material side, the fascist party also fully provided for each new member. As soon as a young man donned a black blouse and joined a local group of adult or young fascists, the scourge of unemployment no longer was terrible for him. All members of the fascist links receive weapons and maintenance from their organizations... at the rates of local trade unions.

But if the working and least well-off part of the petty-bourgeois youth was drawn into the organization of the fascist party as a blind mechanical instrument of class struggle, directed against their own brothers, then the fully conscious creators of the fascist ideology were those “scientists” on whose shoulders falls the honorable “task of defending Italian culture.”

And we know that the bourgeoisie of all times and nations understood the protection of culture as the protection of their class privileges, hypocritically portraying the working class as the enemy of all spiritual values, including science, art, etc.

The majority of Italian universities, led by such defenders of the "covenants of culture", turned into real police stations, citadels of capitalist reaction, turning their weapons towards the working class. It is enough to cite the following example: at the very beginning of the heyday of Italian fascism, as many as two-thirds of the students of

the Milan Polytechnic (mostly the sons of landowners and factory owners) were already taking an active part in suppressing workers' and peasants' unrest!

It is worth noting the speech of “Mussolini himself”, addressed by him to the students of the University of Padua on June 2, 1923, in response to the servile reception given to him by the professors and students of this educational institution.

Having noted at the beginning of his speech that the students of Italy had always been at the forefront of the battles, Mussolini hastened to express gratitude to the bourgeois youth on behalf of the fascist party:

"We shall never forget that thousands of young men came out of the universities, dressed in black blouses, went out into the streets at a certain moment and put an end to the activities of dishonest political rogues - young men who, grabbing by the collar with their powerful hands all the outlived rogues and adventurers, pushed them out of the way and forced them to give up their place to new generations of the Italian people."

In conclusion, Mussolini expressed confidence that as long as there were universities in Italy and young people who attended these universities, Italy's future was assured. The youth had slammed the doors of the past. As long as the universities existed, the nation was completely safe: at the right moment they would rise to defend its national greatness.

After uttering a bunch of more compliments to the bourgeois youth, Mussolini invited the students to sing the traditional university song “Let's go.”[3], declaring that this student song is a symbol of law and order and patriotism.

VI

Tasks of the proletarian youth.

Here Mussolini is absolutely right: since fascism is a movement of the big bourgeoisie, aimed at perpetuating its class privileges, which it realizes with the help of the petty bourgeoisie, as well as by blinding the most ignorant and downtrodden part of

3 A student song in Latin is now the anthem of reactionary students.

the working class and peasantry, the best exponent of fascist ideology can and should be a close alliance between a capitalist, a bourgeois scientist and a priest. Capital, which financed all fascist organizations and, in conclusion, helped a pack of renegades and criminal bandits to get to state power, a professor, hypocritically proclaiming from the heights of his department that fascism is called upon to save bourgeois culture, based on high “idealistic” values, from the barbaric invasion of communism and materialism, religious preachers promising the working masses heavenly bliss as a reward for submission to earthly authorities and the existing bourgeois system - this venerable triumvirate is the stronghold of that enslavement which international fascism brings to the working masses of the whole world.

One of the first writers to come out against Italian fascism, the anarchist Luigi Fabri, entitled his book: "Preventive Counter-Revolution." Subsequently, this name began to be grafted onto fascism everywhere. The fascists themselves did not object to it, introducing into it only this change, that they proudly call their movement "revolution," and all attempts by communists and other revolutionaries aimed at overthrowing the fascist despotism are called "counter-revolution." But, in any case, they agree that their main task is "preventing" social revolution in Italy. In order to achieve this goal, they exerted all their efforts to bleed and completely weaken the working class through systematic persecution, terror, the destruction of its organizations, etc. To a certain extent, they succeeded. When in 1920 a powerful movement of metalworkers in northern Italy broke out, leading to their seizure of factories and plants, but was subsequently vilely betrayed by the reformists, everyone expected that Italy would be the country that would be the first after Russia to successfully complete the work of social revolution. The ensuing fascist reaction delayed the realization of these hopes for a long time.

But nevertheless, fascism was late. The world war had shaken the capitalist system to its foundations, and the consequences of the war fell with a particularly heavy burden not only on the proletariat, but also on that part of the petty bourgeoisie that had

been thrown off track and had taken a wavering position in many European countries: sometimes marching in step with reformist socialism, sometimes going over entirely to the side of extreme capitalist reaction. Under the shadow of reformism, the bourgeoisie in a number of entire countries managed to hold back the social revolution for a time, but it did not manage to prevent the emergence of a powerful communist movement, which was increasingly uniting the workers of the whole world into one solidary family. Despite the raging reaction almost everywhere in modern Europe, other branches of the international revolutionary movement, such as revolutionary syndicalism, have not been uprooted. Italian fascism must first and foremost reckon with these enemies.

If capitalist reaction, by any means, fair or foul, by violence and deceit, has succeeded in recruiting into its ranks a portion of the blinded and ignorant working youth, this conquest ceases to be durable from the moment of the emergence of the international communist movement. At the moment of the decisive clash between the detachments of the social revolution and the fascist reaction, even the most downtrodden and blinded portion of the working youth will not, cannot, be a reliable fellow traveler of reaction.

In this consciousness the working youth of the whole world - the best hope of the international revolutionary movement - must draw its hopes and its energy. The fascist youth of Italy is doomed to defeat from the moment the first organization of revolutionary youth was born in Italy. Only for a time could the fascist reaction introduce a certain obscurity into the class consciousness of the working youth of Italy; only by threats, violence and shameless sophistry could it drive them under the buffoonish banners of its pogrom squads.

By straining their courageous propaganda to the utmost, tirelessly explaining to the worker-peasant youth the entire false essence of fascist ideology, recognized only as a cover for the naked, brutal struggle of the bankrupt big bourgeoisie for its continued existence and the preservation of its privileges, the unions of working youth will achieve that from under the buffoonish fascist banners all those whose class interests and

proletarian consciousness clearly tell them that they must be on the other side of the barricades will leave.

And then the task of "preventing" social revolution in Italy, as in other countries, will be thwarted. On one side there will remain a handful of "golden" university youth, daddy's and mommy's boys, desperately fighting for their right to a parasitic existence in modern society, and on the other - multi-million cadres of working youth, called upon to build with their own hands a new world of freedom and equality for all.

The words of all the fascist poets and scribblers about the black detachments of rapists and bandits, staining the blooming fields and cities of blessed Italy with the innocent blood of workers, being the embodiment of... a joyful spring, will then seem like pitiful tinsel. With deep hatred the working people will then send to the grave the gloomy undertaking of the greatest traitor of the working class in the whole world - the former socialist leader Mussolini - and, breathing deeply, will greet the true spring - the renewed life of liberated humanity.